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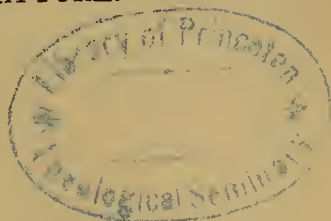






# THE PEOPLE'S BIBLE:

*DISCOURSES UPON HOLY SCRIPTURE.*



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"WEAVER STEPHEN," "EVERY MORNING," "THE  
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# THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE

TO THE

## ROMANS.

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[NOTE.—“The Epistle to the Romans was addressed to the Christians residing in the metropolis of that great empire, whose dominion then extended over almost the whole known world.

“At what time or by whom the Gospel was first preached in the Imperial City is unknown. That it was at an early period may be inferred from the circumstance that, when Paul wrote this Epistle, the faith of the Roman Christians ‘was spoken of throughout the whole world’ (chap. i. 8). It is probable that some of those ‘strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,’ who were present at Jerusalem on the great day of Pentecost, Acts ii. 10, carried back to that city the knowledge of the Gospel. And it is not improbable, also, considering the constant intercourse between Rome and the provinces, that some of the numerous converts to Christianity in Judæa, Asia Minor, and Greece, might soon have found their way to the capital. That some of the persons concerned in the establishment of the Church of Rome (two of whom Paul mentions as having been converted earlier than himself) were Paul’s particular friends, with whom he had met while preaching in Asia and in Greece, is evident from the form of the salutations in chap. xvi. 3-16.

“The date of this Epistle is very precisely fixed by the following facts. Paul had not yet been to Rome (i. 11, 13, 15). He was intending to visit it, after first visiting Jerusalem (xv. 23-28), and this was his purpose during his three months’ residence at Corinth, Acts xix. 21. He was about to carry a collection from Macedonia and Achaia to Jerusalem (xv. 26, 31): and this he did carry from Corinth to Jerusalem at the close of his visit, Acts xxiv. 17. When he wrote the Epistle, Timothy, Sosipater, Gaius, and Erastus were with him (xvi. 21, 23). Gaius was his host, and resided at Corinth, 1 Cor. i. 14. Erastus was himself a Corinthian, and had been sent shortly before from Ephesus with Timothy on their way through Corinth to Macedonia, Acts xix. 22: 1 Cor. xvi. 10, 11; and the first three are expressly mentioned in Acts xx. 4 as being with Paul at Corinth. Phœbe, moreover, the bearer of the Epistle, was a member of the Church at the Corinthian port of Cenchrea (xvi. 1). As Paul, therefore, was preparing to visit

Jerusalem, one of his converts was also departing from Corinth, in an opposite direction, for Rome, and by her this Epistle was taken to that city. Its date is thus fixed, A.D. 58."—ANGUS'S *Bible Handbook*.]

### Romans i. 1-7.

1. Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle [a called apostle] separated [set apart unto] the Gospel of God.

[“The form of salutation with which St. Paul begins his Epistles” (says *The Speaker's Commentary*) “is here enlarged by important statements concerning his Apostolic office, the nature of the Gospel, and the Person of Christ. This stately fulness in the opening address of the Epistle well befits the grandeur of its subject, and the dignity of a Church seated in the Imperial City, to which the writer was as yet unknown.”

“Ver. 1. Official designation of the writer. St. Paul's first care, in addressing a Church to which he is not personally known, is to show by what authority he writes.”]

2. (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy Scriptures),  
3. Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;

4. And declared *to be* the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead [*read*, of the dead]:

5. By whom we have received [*rather*, through whom we received] grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith [obedience to faith] among all nations, for his name [*or*, for his name's sake]:

6. Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ:

7. To all that be in Rome, beloved of God [*rather*, To all God's beloved that are in Rome], called *to be* saints [*Lit.* called saints]: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

### DEFINITIONS.

**H**ITHERTO we have only known Paul as a speaker; in that capacity he has created a space for himself; after he began to preach, all other persons seemed to cease: now that he begins to write, all other writers will stand behind him. How well that name looks at the head of the First Epistle, according to the present construction of the English New Testament!—"Paul." Some people regret that he ever wrote: he created the Theology of the Church, he introduced controversy into a family of peace and love and hope; he represents the intellectual element of the Church, he seems to be all reason, argument, controversy. I rejoice that he ever wrote. No man has been so ill-used in the Church, in the pulpit, in the press, as the Apostle Paul. He has been turned into a kind of preliminary hint that a man called Calvin was to be born in the course of



the centuries. Paul seems to have been handed over to this man Calvin. Now we have in Christ's Church Calvinism : what an intrusion ; what an offence ; what a blasphemy ! There ought to be nothing in Christ's Church but Christ. Men interrogate one another now as to their relation to Calvinism : could they grieve the spirit of that great man Calvin more than by thus exaggerating his importance ? He wished to be a modest, wise, zealous reformer and teacher ; he never meant himself to be carved like a wooden idol, and set up at the church door that men might uncover before him as if he were a species of Deity. If there is any man in the wide universe who is not a Calvinist, his name is Paul. If any man ever arose to proclaim the universality of the love of Christ, it was the converted Saul of Tarsus. Paul will have everybody brought in, if they will come. How he smites the Jews who pride themselves upon their election to Divine privileges ; the key of the Pauline argument, or the secret of the Pauline enthusiasm, you will find in chap. ii. 11, "For there is no respect of persons with God." How conveniently men pass over such passages and fasten themselves upon mysteries and most wonderful words which they cannot understand. How delighted men are to lose themselves in arguments they cannot adjust. Simplicity itself cannot go farther than this—"There is no respect of persons with God." And again Paul says, "I am a debtor both to the Greeks, and to the barbarians ; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome also." When we come to the ninth chapter, which is full of that ghastly figure called the potter, we shall find, under what I conceive to be a right interpretation, that the chapter glows with Divine love.

How does Paul describe himself ? "A servant of Jesus Christ." Some titles we would take from men, because we are able to prove that they have no right to them ; the title is larger than they are ; they perish under a weight of ornamental nomenclature ; when Paul announces himself as a servant of Jesus Christ, all who have studied his life up to this point, as we have done in this PEOPLE'S BIBLE, will say, that is right : truer servant God never had ; more willing slave never followed the chariot of the Cross ;

let Paul be crowned the prince of the servants of Jesus Christ. Paul would have called himself by a name which in English seems to be lower than servant; again and again Paul describes himself as "the slave of Jesus Christ," as who should say, I must always be under the chains of my Lord's captivity, I disdain any liberty that does not hold me in sweet bondage and fealty to the Son of God; I want no freedom that is not centred in, and sanctified by his Cross. When some men come into even this description of servitude they seem to be following out a species of natural sequence; we are not surprised that they should so superscribe or subscribe themselves: but when we trace the history of Paul, and remember that his name was once Saul; when we recount his pedigree and mark his haughtiness, and then find such a man writing himself "slave"; we cannot forbear the exclamation, "What hath God wrought?" We expected to find Peter here, yet we find Paul. Is Peter displaced? Certainly not: but every man will stand according to his faculty and his service in the summing-up of things. Nor should there be anything invidious in this classification; it should be felt to be right, harmonic, necessary, and the farthest off should bless the farthest forward as a brother and leader and friend. If "Paul" had stood alone as a name, we should have said, this Pharisee has not yet been cleansed of his vanity, and pride: but when he describes himself as the "slave of Jesus Christ," we feel that he enters the arena in a right spirit, and we cannot but listen to him to hear whether it is Paul that speaks, or the servant of Jesus Christ that claims and entrances our attention. The Apostle proceeds farther in introducing himself, describing his office as an apostleship, and his apostleship as a Divine investiture. The words are "called to be an apostle." What a call was necessary! what a voice was needed to reach a man who was so far off! The voice had to travel across deserts, and forests, and boiling seas, and mountains that shadowed the sun. Whom God calls to office he calls from eternity. That startles us, and forces our little peddling minds into theological distinctions, simply because we have an element which we call Time. God has no such element. Time cannot hold him. If he come into any moment of time it is as an accommodation, an infinite condescension, a very miracle of self-humiliation. All God's calls start

from eternity, and return to their origin. How difficult it is for us to sustain the sublimity of this glorious doctrine! We love the little because we are little ourselves; we are bounded on every side, hemmed in, shut up, enclosed, nearly crushed by the little cage we live in. In Jesus Christ we are called to look upon eternity, infinity; upon the countless, the boundless, the measureless: towards this ideal we are to grow, and as we grow towards it we do not neglect the little, but glorify it. Nor is the Apostle yet contented with his description, for he adds these words, namely, "separated unto the gospel of God"; meaning that he would never have anything else to do; signifying that from all other attractions, charms, vocations, engagements, he had been for ever detached; distinctly announcing that, hence on, whoever inquired for Paul must ask for, "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ." Without such consecration we may well suspect our call. When did God call upon men for a half-heart, for part of time, money, power, influence? When was God content with any outside corner of our affection and solicitude? God claims us all, for he made us all. He wants our reason and imagination and conscience and will and affection, every element and fibre and particle of tissue entering into the mystery of manhood. We have given God the patronage of a finger; he asks us for the homage of the heart.

In the first verse we have a standard by which all Christians must describe themselves. Let us then imagine ourselves putting our names in some such descriptive form. Up to the writing of the name, we are strong and clear; we could write what stands for "Paul" with a firm hand: now add the descriptive expressions! Every man must do this for himself. It will be an edifying exercise, if a man will go into solitude and write down just what he knows himself to be. No human eye should see the paper on which he writes. Dip the pen in the heart; let the inkhorn be loaded with blood: now write—not what men think you are, not what you wish the world to suppose you are, but what you are in your inmost soul. Fire will be too cold to receive the document which you have penned. Let us suppose there are persons who could write a record they would be proud of; then we are not proud of them. The supposition is not that

we are to write what society judges us to be, or what we are in reality in relation to society, for in that relation there are good and bad, respectable and disreputable, honourable and base; the supposition is that we are to write upward to God. We dare not deceive or mock the most High. By the motive he judges. He knows whether a dream would shape itself into actual benevolence or not, he understands the going of the heart; not a tick of life's little pulse but God knows the meaning of. It would do us good to write autobiographically sometimes, not from the point of incident or event or happy chance or lucky progress, but an autobiography of the soul, what it is, what it thinks, what it wants, what it suspects, what it dreams: no man could read his own writing!

Throughout the introduction to this Epistle there is hardly any attempt at what we call definition. Great terms are used, and are left to make their own impression, which is the best way. The worst thing to do with the Epistle to the Romans is to try to explain it. Read it, commit it to the heart, let it fall into all the play of life's rough music, and its meanings will come, as birds come in springtime, and as buds grow in the night and surprise us in the morning, and as love reveals itself in new shape and colour and tone, even after we expected we had exhausted the precious mystery. The Church has ruined itself by definitions; because the Church now stops at the definition, and does not go right through to the vital feeling and the necessary and eternal reality. All men are not mentally equal, so why plague all men with the same definitions? Define for yourselves: love God in your own way. What have you to do with my definitions, or I with your definitions? We may have them, we may be edified by them; but we must not harden them into dogmas with which to choke young faith, young hope, young love. All men have not been technically trained; therefore why force upon all men technical definitions? All men are not equally interested in definitions: why drag down all human minds to the same level? Some men do not live in definition; they live in love, in hope, in emotion, in imagination, in great gushes of sacred feeling, which do not die as foam dies on the wave, but which tend towards the stimulus of beneficence,

and all manner of heroic and sacrificial action. If there is a sentimentalism which comes in like a whiff of smoke upon a wave and dies upon the beach, we all have an equally low opinion of that kind of sentiment; but there is an emotion which acts upon life like a dynamic force, moving all its mechanical appliance and apparatus into powerful action: the value of that particular kind of emotion can never be exaggerated. How do men conduct themselves when they come into possession of great estates? There are persons so learnedly foolish as to be their own lawyers; their heads grow grey over the consideration of subjects they were never trained to comprehend; to that peculiar kind of social philosopher I have nothing to say: there are other men who argue thus: I have come into this great estate; all questions of title I must leave with the lawyers. To a certain degree we may profitably follow their example in matters religious. No doubt there have been geniuses who have had almost an inspired gift for the creation of difficulties in theological study; far be it from me to take honour from any man; if, therefore, any man claims that he has been the creator of theological difficulty, the palm be his who wins it: others of us must say, We have come into a large estate, and we must leave theological titles to the theologians; we cannot do better; we could make nothing of such titles. And the theologians can make nothing of them; but as they have nothing else to do they may as well suppose themselves to be busy. Theology is the ruin of the Cross when it is hardened into unchangeable forms; when it has undergone that process of torture which represents, not a piety, but a blasphemy. We cannot be theologians, but we can be humble, broken-hearted, active, generous, self-sacrificing Christians. "Faith is greater than any definition of faith, as God is greater than any definition of God." What is faith? We cannot tell, but we feel it; the action of a new life enlarges us, makes us see things in heaven and earth we never saw before, gives us sweet contentment even in the very heart of earth's whirling cyclone; a marvellous peace blesses us in the exercise of an energy or aspiration which we describe by the name of Faith. That marvellous term means a hundred things; it may be a hundred different things, yet their differences are all harmonisable, and can be all brought into one expressive and



vital unity. In one man, faith is a new imagination, a higher mental faculty, a keener intellectual penetration; a softer, tenderer, moral condition; a noble confidence, an assurance, never to be perturbed that all things will end in rest and glory: to others, faith is an almost visible angel that takes hold of the soul and leads it to the Cross: to others, faith is an almost audible angel that talks in whispers in the darkness, and speaks of morning when every star is dead: faith, to others, is a grand moral constraint, causing them to work, give, and suffer, that others may be blessed. Love is greater than any definition of love. We have had occasion to say in these studies that no man can define love. If you want to see a lexicographer with all his honours on him set him to work on a polysyllable; there he works away, like a dog with a bone: he has no time for anything else than lexicography when he is among the *sesquipedalia verba*. If you wish to see a lexicographer really humble, ask him to define "Home," "Love," "Peace," "Life." These are all little words of four or five letters. Where his greatness now? where the dignity that filled his guest with awe as the residence of the lexicographer? All gone! For pity's sake I sometimes refrain from expecting the dictionary to explain love, because if I were to look for it I should feel as if I were inflicting a kind of cruelty upon some anonymous friend; so I turn to some grand polysyllable and let the lexicographer show me the whole of his elaborate nothings. We cannot too frequently repeat what has already found a place in these annotations. A poor woman came with the request that she might be allowed to partake of the elements of the Lord's Supper; she was examined in the Catechism, and could answer nothing; she had her attention called to the standards, and could make no reply; she was asked for her views, and she had none—blessed was that woman amongst women! The orthodox examiner said that, under these circumstances, she could not be permitted to come to the Lord's Table. The great hot tears came into her eyes, and she said, speaking of Christ, "I cannot answer these questions, but I could die for him." The examiner was a wise man, and he said, "Then come to this Table." That is the kind of emotion we do not underrate: we do not ask people to come to the Table or to the Cross of Christ through a long process of questioning; we say,

What is your heart's desire? Bring all your sin with you, and all your ignorance, and all your dumbness as to theological eloquence, and tarry in silence till your Lord speaks to you. Definition is impossible. We cannot define what is infinite; we have no need to trust to definition, for religion if anything is a revelation, not an intellectual discovery. The temptations of definition are insidious and most hurtful; they tend to elicit intellectual vanity; one man can define and another man cannot define; then, what an invidious distinction is created between the two men! We are bringing a worse crucifixion upon Christ than the crucifying of his body by the creation of little priests and popes, who call themselves the authorised expositors and definers of eternal truth. To see these men on the common highway hurts me; I want to unclothe them, and send them back to their proper insignificance; whatever significance they now have is an affair of clothes and decoration, not life, indescribable and boundless as enthusiasm. To think that one little soul holds something that you, working, toiling, mercantile men, do not know is an affront to common-sense; it is absurd from end to end. Yet, it flatters the poor fool. If any man has learned more in the heart than I have learned, let him be my teacher; he will not stand at a distance from me and speak down to me, but we should reason together. There is an educated heart, there is a cultivated feeling, there is a sanctified masonry and brotherhood. When the heart has enriched itself with innumerable views and conceptions of truth it will come and whisper them all, tell them all, as a little child babbles out its story, and will never say, you are scholar and I am teacher; you have had no advantages, and I have had very great advantages: but there will be a community of interest, in the holy excitement of which the first shall be last, and the last shall be first, and the uppermost, divinest theme shall be that we are both put in trust with the treasure of God. Are there then to be no ministers? Certainly there must be ministers, but they must be ministers who feel their littleness and their worthlessness; they will not be ministers who want to know what somebody thought fourteen or fifteen hundred years ago. I would rather take the opinion of some poor broken-down woman on the streets of London on certain passages of Scripture, than I would take the opinion of

any council that ever was evoked by emperor or pope. If the last boy who has passed through the common school does not know more of God's universe than ever Augustine had the chance of knowing, then civilisation is living backwards and will shortly fall into the barbarism from which it sprang. We do not want to go to Augustine. We have as proper respect for him as we can have for anybody that never did us any good. We want to go where he went. Arise, let us go to our God! All we want for the understanding of Jesus Christ's life is Jesus Christ's Spirit.

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#### PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we stand in the righteousness of Christ, for we have no righteousness of our own. He is our righteousness; he became sin for us that we might sin no more, but that we might become holy as our Father in heaven is holy. We bless thee for this aim at conduct; we would that our character were rooted in God, nourished by all the grace and consolation of heaven, and made beautiful by all holy actions towards observing man. We would be perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect: how can this be with mortal man? We come to thee, the author of the aspiration, that thou mayest also fulfil it; this desire is from the Lord; we therefore know that thou wilt not forsake us when we endeavour to realise it in daily conduct. We bless thee for the Gospel; it is light, it is music, it is eternal joy. We are not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, because it has made us new creatures: old things have passed away, all things have become new. We now see ourselves in God's light, now we judge ourselves by the Divine standard, now we see the emptiness of time, the oncoming of the grandeur of eternity. May we walk as wise men, redeeming the time, answering all the appeals of Providence with a glad heart and an obedient will; receiving from thee the dispensation of the day without murmuring, oftentimes with joy and gladness of heart; but whether it be up the hill or down the valley, or on the stormy water, only thou, Saviour of the world, be near us, and we shall know that we are always going home. Amen.



Romans ii. 16.

"According to my gospel."

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO PAUL.

YOU have heard of the Gospel according to Matthew, of the Gospel according to Mark ; these are familiar expressions with Christians. They speak of the Gospel according to Luke without any surprise ; they refer to the Gospel according to John. Have you ever heard of the Gospel according to Paul ? Is there any book in the New Testament which bears that title ? The title is not always on the surface of the letter. The preacher is sometimes at a loss to give a title to his own sermon. Every word of the sermon is his, but how to sum up the whole discourse under one brief expressive title is often more difficult than to conceive and to utter the entire essay. There is no book in the New Testament which bears upon its face the title "The Gospel according to Paul" ; yet there are words in the New Testament exactly similar to, may we not say precisely identical with, these. Where are they ? They are used especially in the Epistle to the Romans, where (ii. 6) we read "According to my gospel." Was that a slip of the pen ? It is singular that if it were a lapse of the pen it occurs again in xvi. 25 :—"According to my gospel." Is there food enough in Paul's gospel to be going on with ? Will he lack bread who sits at Paul's table ? The Apostle was always intensely individual, so much so that persons who do not understand the exact definition of the terms have relieved their minds (pardon the irony) by describing Paul as egotistical. Some persons ought not to know even that much elementary Latin ; it is dangerous to trust some speakers with even the alphabet of a dead language. The Apostle Paul had a gospel ; he hesitated not to call it "my gospel." In very deed, every Christian believer must have his own gospel ; every worshipper must have his own God : that is to say, his own

conception of the Gospel, his own conception of God, his own peculiar and incommunicable experience of Divine life in the soul. I live, said Paul, yet not I: it is my Gospel, yet not mine; it is my God, yet no invention or creation of my imagination. Thus does he intensely and usefully personalise the abstract; thus does Paul appropriate the riches of history, and turn them into the available treasures of the immediate day.

It will be interesting to read the Gospel according to Paul. The other Gospellers are always telling stories, relating incidents or anecdotes, recording miracles, and the like; until John comes, who, being a man of another altitude and quality of mind, takes a course peculiarly his own, so spiritual, intuitional, penetrating, divine. He is succeeded by Paul, the only man who could succeed him. He must be a very skilful speaker who follows the Apostle John; it will be easy after such a writer to perpetrate an anti-climax. To some men conclusions properly belong. They must have no successors on the immediate occasion; it is theirs by, as it were, Divine prescription to utter the climacteric word. Wherever John might have come, even chronologically, he comes in the right place after the three Synoptic narrators; and Paul comes in the right place after John. Paul was excelled in nothing. Whatever the subject was, Paul is chief. Once with supposed egotism he says, "I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles." How true that is is not a matter of personal testimony, but a matter of literary criticism. Here are the words of Matthew and Mark, Luke and John, Peter and James, and here are the words of Paul, and they tower out above them all, as the steeple rises above the whole church. Is it a great argument? who can reason like Paul? Is love the favourite theme of John's contemplative and gentle spirit? John himself might have stood amazed, divinely stunned, when Paul took up his own theme and showed him that he had not yet begun to realise all the mystery of its beauty.

It will, therefore, I repeat, be interesting to know what Paul's gospel is, how Divine things strike a mind like that, four-square, yet circular; looking everywhere, and yet taking all the interstitial points as if they were main coigns. Paul is as grand in

interstitial speech as in the main substantive groundwork of his argument. You should study the parentheses of Paul. The Apostle could put great gospels within brackets. He had a gift of condensation. A touch of that finger made the whole creation vibrate. Some fingers have no life. Let us hasten to this new speaker. How will he put things? We can only touch his gospel here and there, at some salient point, or in some out-of-the-way and overlooked line. We cannot pretend to exhaust what Paul himself only introduced. When Paul looked back upon all he had done, to him it was but alphabetic, the meanest element; the infinite apocalypse belonged to eternity. We cannot be great where Paul himself trembled under a sense of incompetency and failure. Yet here and there we can see light. We can see a long way through a small window. Who ever looked through a whole window? We always look through one pane. We could do without a good deal of the window for the mere matter of seeing; through one little leaded pane we could see Lebanon and Bashan, and the blue lakes of the Holy Land. So through many a little sentence of Paul's we can see what he wants to be at. It is grand to see such a soul in travail. Paul was a Calvinist before Calvin. No; if ever there was a man who was not Calvinistic, it was the Apostle Paul. Yet he has been dragged over to that fellowship; they would make him a member of that Church; they have proposed, seconded, and carried unanimously that he be entered upon the register. They have entered him, and kept him, and misinterpreted him, and endeavoured to do much mischief through him.

Let us hear some great speech from those great lips. First of all Paul will lay down a doctrine respecting God's action that shatters everything like bigotry, partiality, and meanness of soul. Saith Paul, "There is no respect of persons with God (ii. 11). We must believe that such music came from heaven. There are persons who have a great Creator, and a very limited Redeemer. They will have it that God created all; they will not have it that God redeemed all. Thus we degrade, bring down step by step, the Deity. If you set before certain minds that God made every star, every little star, all the clusters of starry dust needing to be clustered and festooned or they would

have no visibleness; if you set before them that God made every grassblade and every insect, they will say, Surely that is so; if you set before them that God made all men, they would instantly assent: but when it is suggested to them that the Redeemer is built on the same lines as the Creator, that Omnipotence can never shrink into partial strength; then they speak of mystery, and inscrutable decrees, and awful judgments of Providence,—always taking care that they themselves are well in near the centre, while they bemoan the possibility that somebody else is not in, and that God is to be held accountable for their exclusion. Paul, speak to us; great heart, say something to us that will leave nobody out! Here is his answer: God is no respecter of persons—"there is no respect of persons with God." Peter said the same thing in presence of Cornelius; the whole Scripture bears evidence to the same sublime inclusiveness of the Divine love. Then, have you to make yourself an outsider? On what do you base the reason of your exclusion from Divine mercy and pity and tears? Not upon Paul's gospel; there is not a word in all Paul's writing, which, being interpreted in the Pauline spirit—that is the vital point—excludes any man from the possibility of salvation.

But, say some, Paul was an Antinomian before the time. The Antinomian is supposed to believe that he is all right; a favourite of eternity, a darling of heaven; and that do what he may it all goes for nothing in the matter of degrading him; he may commit all possible sins, and yet they will not be accounted to him for unrighteousness: he is in grace and cannot be displaced. Does Paul say anything about this? What is the Gospel according to Paul? "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified"—(ii. 13)—rectified, made straight up, perpendicular men. Where now your sleek Antinomian who wants to pray in the morning, and sin all day, and pray again at night as if nothing had happened? Paul will have the law done. The law is nothing until it is transferred into life. Is this the man whom they put against James, as if Paul and James differed from one another; James being the ethical teacher, who will have all his men working night and day, and Paul being the Antinomian teacher, so to say,

who will have his men believing speculatively and trusting to God's grace and not to their own works? There is no discrepancy between the apostles. Between apostles sent from God there never can be any discrepancy. Whatever appears to be discrepancy is only in terms, is only on the surface, is only incidental: when you come to put all the speech and revelation together it totals up into one melody. Here, then, the Gospel according to Paul is a gospel of doing, a gospel of obedience, a gospel of discipline.

Paul has been represented as one who excluded everybody but the few; as regarding the heathen as more or less given over to judgment and final loss; they had no Gospel, they had no prophets, they had no Divine Scriptures. This would be indeed a misrepresentation of the apostolic mind and heart. What about these "Gentiles which have not the law?" He says, they may "do by nature the things contained in the law." We do not always know what we are doing; the sources of our inspiration cannot always be traced. There are Christians who have never confessed Christ. The Gentiles, saith Paul, "having not the law, are a law unto themselves." How so? Because, saith Paul, they have "the law written in their hearts." Have Gentiles hearts—Pagans, heathens, far-away people, whom we are afraid almost to think of, have they hearts? Yes, in the great interpretation of human nature. When the real Gospeller comes he will find men in brutes, sons of Abraham in discarded ruins. What saith Paul?—"their conscience also bearing witness." Have Gentiles conscience? Is conscience possible apart from the Bible? Is a moral experience or a moral law possible apart from a written standard? Paul says it is. What is it that guides the Gentile mind, restrains or impels? Paul answers, "their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another." What, does he give the Gentiles hearts, consciences, thoughts? What then is our duty towards men who have not yet realised, as we Gentiles have done, that they belong to our race? Our duty is to go out into all the Gentile world and preach the Gospel to every creature: tell the blindest idolater that he is not far from the kingdom of God; tell the poorest groping soul at the invisible door of heaven that, if he



will put out his hand one inch further, he will touch heaven's own portal, and it will fall back, and he will be in before he fully realises his position. Treat men as men: assume the soul. Never go forward and tell a man that he has a soul: assume it; talk to him as a mother, address his immortality, and he will quicken into a new consciousness, and say, No man ever spoke to me after this manner: what may I not be, after hearing such music, such argument, such appeal? then I myself must be more than I thought I was. When you give man consciousness of access of manhood, you draw him so much nearer God, and prepare him by so much to hear the broadest and profoundest revelations of truth.

But Paul was a ritualist. Paul was such a keeper of the law that if a man had passed through certain mechanical processes all would be right with him. What is the Gospel according to Paul on this subject? Here are men who have been circumcised; they carry the brand upon them, they point to this Jewish stigma and they say, This is our proof: what further need have we of witness or testimony as to our own personal excellence? Paul looks upon the circumcision-mark and says, "Circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision." A very profound and all-judging word! If the light that is in thee be darkness, behold how great is that darkness! Not only is a man's religion, so to say, credited as no religion, it is taken and put on the other scale and made an aggravation. We are the worse for the false religion which we profess; or if our religion be not seconded by conduct, then our evil conduct is reckoned against us as an accumulated transgression. It is not a first offence, it is not an incidental blunder, it is not a mere intellectual error; it is something tied round our neck like a millstone, we have plunged into the depth of the sea. You think you are a Christian because you are born in England. The greatest heathen in the world may be born within the sound of the church-going bells. It is possible to live under the shadow of the sanctuary without ever having seen its God. But if a man has been baptised, how then? Nothing, unless the baptism has led up to its meaning. The type is nothing, only the fulfilment of the type counts. Yet, if

a man has been baptised, the presumption is against him if his conduct be bad. The very fact that some religious attention has been paid to him, and that he has had opportunities of becoming religious, will tell against him if his conduct be unsound. You have been baptised, and yet you may take the baptismal water down to hell. Do not imagine that because you have been circumcised or baptised or confirmed, or admitted into a visible masonic body of Christ, therefore you are right. You are only right when you do right. We are only believers when we are doers. We are in grace when we are in obedience.

Paul is so sublimely inclusive in all his reasoning that he makes us all Jews if we will be Jews. He says the Jew now is altogether a new element in life. Once, only he who could trace himself lineally to Abraham was a Jew, now all that goes for nothing! "he is a Jew, which is one inwardly" (ii. 29): he is a child of faith therefore who is a child of Abraham. "Circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter." You may have been cut with the very knife by which Abraham himself was circumcised, and yet you may be at an immeasurable distance from the gate of heaven. Learn this Gospel according to Paul. He will not have us in the Church because of what somebody else has done; he will have **us** in **God's** Church because we are in God's spirit.

Now there is a doctrine that is quite discarded by some advanced persons. What they are advanced in it is not now my purpose to attempt to determine. But they are marked very largely by what I may term the characteristic of negation. They have got rid of inspiration, and they have got rid of the devil—would God they had!—and they have got rid of miracles, and they have got rid of the supernatural, and they have specially got rid of the doctrine of what is termed original depravity; they have a special hatred of that doctrine, they will not for a moment allow that there is such a thing as original sin. What is the Gospel according to Paul? Paul's Gospel is in chap. iii. 23—"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Who are we that we should contradict Paul? He did more for the race than we have ever done; he did not write critical articles

against other people's charity : he spent and was expended for Christ ; he said " For me to live is Christ." If men get into their subjects by passion and sacrifice and intense and burning sympathy with them, then Paul was in Christ. No man studied Christ so completely, obeyed Christ so lovingly, and served Christ with so faithful a constancy. He was not a student of the letter, he was a companion of the soul of Christ : and this man says, " All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." In other words, all men need a Saviour, all men need their very righteousness to be helped or completed. When we have done our utmost, we are still immeasurably far from God, and therefore God himself must do the rest, carrying up our purposes to a blessed and everlasting fruition.

But Paul was a discriminating theologian. He classified the nations, giving some to God, and leaving some out of God. He partitioned the globe according to his own theological imagination or conviction, so that God was here but not there ; God spake one language, but not another. Never ! It is exactly the contrary that Paul does. He was a Jew : he was not ashamed of his lineal descent ; yet this same man says, " Is he the God of the Jews only ? " (iii. 29.) How can you have a larger charity ? How can there be a nobler catholicity ? " Is he not also of the Gentiles ?"—and understand by " Gentiles " ourselves, those counted heathen, Pagan, alien, outcast. " Yes, of the Gentiles also : seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith." Who will now make Paul a partisan ? Who will venture in face of such declarations as these to make Paul a bigot ? If ever there was a man who wanted to show that redemption was as large as creation, it was Paul. If ever there was a man who did show that where the horizon ends grace only seems to begin, because of its infinite abundance, it was Paul. If ever there was a man who looked at the sun so as to see its real dimensions or magnitude, and so looked at grace to see that it was not a geometrical term, having cubic dimensions and proportions, it was Paul ; for, said he, " Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound," as an ocean abounds over a streamlet, as the sky over-domes the earth. Paul was therefore a believer in universal



departure from God, and in the possibility of universal return to God.

Yet the Apostle will not have faith abused. He says, I see plainly that some of you think you would be easily released from duty if it were a mere question of faith; you are prepared to believe anything: faith is easier to you than obedience: but in talking so recklessly and wantonly, you are misunderstanding the very meaning of faith; you do not know what the word "belief" covers:—"Do we then make void the law through faith?"—are we making the gate wider that leads into heaven? "God forbid: yea, we establish the law." When a man becomes really conversant with the whole mystery of grace, he will go back to the law, a more willing scholar, a more obedient slave; he will take up the whole round of duty, and God's statutes shall become his songs in the house of his pilgrimage. And thus Paul's gospel rolls on.\* Yet it was interrupted by some who misunderstood it. They took occasion to say, If this metaphysical conception of things is all, why then we are released from moral obligation; if we are called upon to cudgel our brains and get hold of some intellectual conception of God and his kingdom, that will be better; we thus get rid of the Decalogue, and we get rid of the whole law, that scheme of regulation and restraint and penalty and reward within which we have been living: I think we shall go over to this metaphysical conception of things. And the Apostle, with that wonderful interrogative power of his, in which he makes the mark of interrogation do the whole work of an argument, shouts, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid." It is so true that every great offer of grace is also a great temptation to the evil

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\* "Why does St. Paul say, 'According to my Gospel'? His arguments hitherto have been drawn from principles universally admitted; a judgment too of some kind was acknowledged both by Jews and Greeks; but that Jesus Christ would be the Judge, by neither. This is a distinctive doctrine of the Gospel (John v. 22; Acts x. 42; xvii. 31; 1 Cor. iv. 5); and as St. Paul has already, in his introduction (i. 1-5, 9, 15, 16), spoken of the preaching of that Gospel as the work to which he was set apart, he here very naturally calls it 'my gospel,' on the first occasion of bringing forward in his argument one of its peculiar doctrines,"—*The Speaker's Commentary*.

spirit that is in man. Man cannot receive God's love without trying to make it an open door into possible disobedience; he says, If the love be so great, what does it matter what I do? If the grace is so infinite in proportion to the sin, what does my little iniquity amount to? What does it matter whether I am a John the Divine, or a Judas Iscariot, in the presence of this infinite abundance of grace? Paul says, Shall we continue in sin, that we may tempt the grace of God, try it, and challenge it, whether it be not greater than our sin; shall we study and graduate to become Judas Iscariots, that we may prove to the world how great and grand is the grace of God? The Apostle's answer is, "God forbid." There is no grander answer. He implores God to save souls from such blasphemy.

This is the Gospel according to Paul. It is the same as all the other Gospels. These are all extracts from one grand concerted piece of music. A wondrous concert: here a solo, there a single chord; here a chorus, and yonder a trembling note that can hardly live we think, but that must live because it belongs to eternity. And when these are brought together, what have we but the old Bible, grandest of books, treasure-house of God; having in it all things we want,—a wheatfield, a vineyard, a garden of delights, a fountain of life. O Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, it is thy Gospel, yet not thine: for all good news starts from heaven.

### Romans iii.

#### THE LAW OF FAITH.

**W**HAT advantage then hath the Jew? (ver. 1). Somebody must have an advantage. All men cannot begin at the same point. What is the advantage which God has allotted to some? Is it a vital difference, or is it only an initial privilege, carrying with it a great responsibility, and meant to be shared by all the world? Is God a partisan, a darling-maker? Has he made some men to be saved, and others to be damned? The Apostle undertakes to discuss these great questions, and to discuss them in a way which has been in too many instances absolutely misunderstood. It is amazing to find how often the Apostle has been taken in the exactly contrary sense to that which he meant to establish. There is nothing narrow about Paul; he has no heaven filled with little darlings, pet saints—favoured ones, on whom God for some inscrutable reason has set peculiar marks of favour. The Apostle says God is no respecter of persons. The Apostle is not indiscriminating; he knows that the Jews had advantages, and great advantages; but he acknowledges these, and then proceeds to show that the Jews were as bad as anybody else. The Apostle is very erratic in all this epistolary discussion: he cannot keep to the point two moments. The genius of his mind is revealed in this epistle characteristically. He will not follow out any one line of thought; the Apostle's was a fervent, erratic, ardent, and often uncontrollable genius. The Apostle Paul had not time to finish sentences; he scarcely began one sentence before he saw the opening of another, and he plunged after it by no recognised law of movement. In this very chapter he says "in the first place," but he never says "in the second place"; he forgets that he had proposed to himself an arithmetical enumeration. The book is the better for this. It is not mechanical; it is not a piece of art in clay: this is a mind on fire, a mind let loose amid the radiant

mysteries of God ; and now the mind is here, and now there, and before anything is rounded into spherical completeness and harmony, the mind bounds off again in some other direction ; so that chapter iii. is completed in chapter ix. : and yet who would not rather have this Paul-like rush and tumult of thinking, with its million points of suggestiveness, than some smooth and easily forgotten insignificance ? Those who have a partisan heaven have no vindication of it in the Epistle to the Romans, and yet it is on that epistle they have built their little pantheon. If they do meet Paul face to face one of the parties will be ashamed. If ever there was an epistle written by the human hand that was meant to commend the universality of the Divine love and the universality of the Cross of Christ, it is the Epistle to the Romans. And yet some men have leased this epistle for a given period of years, and have let out heaven in small parcels to people on whom they have fixed their indiscriminating and worthless affection.

“What advantage then hath the Jew ? . . . Much every way : chiefly [literally, in the first place] because that unto them were committed the oracles of God,”—not oracles in the Pagan sense of dim, mysterious, ambiguous utterances of which nothing could be made, but the utterances of God, the flashing words, the life-giving syllables, the treasury of wisdom. Somebody must have these in the first place. The mountains have great advantages over the valleys, because they catch the first sunlight, but they grow nothing : the plough has not wrought its mystery of tillage on Alpine heights ; it would be out of place there, and the snow-peaks would resent the intrusion. Yet it is on them that the dawn first alights ; the valleys have to wait. Somebody must begin first. It is so with liberty : why not with grace ? All nations do not enjoy an equal extent of freedom. The nations that do enjoy the freedom are not put in possession of it as a selfish franchise and inheritance and family estate. Every nation that is inspired with the spirit of philanthropy as well as with the spirit of patriotism holds its liberty for the world ; opens its door widely that every runaway who has brought with him a good character may find hospitality and security. The time was when men could say, the moment the slave touches British soil his trammels drop from him and he stands up a man. This

freedom is held in trust. Our liberties are not to make us self-conceited but to liberalise us, and make us feel that we have a gospel for all who are in bonds. It is a great responsibility to have the first laws, the first light, the first liberty, the first inkling of the right relation of things. That advantage brings with it its responsibilities. No man can rightly hold a liberty and keep it to himself. In the apostolic times they had all things common, and we must have them all common now; not in the little detailed pedantic sense, but in the greater meaning of the words. He who has liberty has it for all men; he who has knowledge is but a trustee of his knowledge, that he may deal it out to those who are in ignorance and long to be instructed; he who is strong holds his strength for the weak. Whenever you see a nation beaten down by a strong arm you have a right to interfere; whenever you see a child cruelly ill-treated by a ruffian, that child becomes yours by the right of its helplessness. Parenthood is created by great necessities. No strong man is at liberty to take his strength away unused and unimpaired when he has seen the weak smitten and the helpless oppressed. The Jews were treasurers, the Jews were librarians; the Jews had the oracles, or utterances of God, not to keep, but to publish. They did not understand them, but their not understanding the scope of their mission in the world does not reflect on the benevolence and the love of the all-saving Father. Possibly, the Apostle thinks, you may object to this reasoning because some Jews are unbelieving—"for what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?" The doctrine of the Apostle is that the unbelief of some does not destroy the value of the faith of others. He is not laying down here a maxim which requires a trained sagacity to penetrate and understand. The Apostle here writes the alphabet of things. We do in commerce precisely what the Apostle is doing in what may be termed theology. Because there is one fraudulent person in the city, is the city thereof wholly given over to dishonesty? On the contrary; the dishonesty of the few may be a foil throwing up into keener expressiveness the righteousness and honourableness of the many. Because there is falsehood in some, is there truthfulness in none? Because some are selfish, are all wanting in benevolence? There is a public health which, as we have

seen, is perfectly consistent with countless instances of personal disease. There is a national honesty, so that a nation as a nation shall have a great reputation among the nations of the earth for honesty, although within that nation itself there may be many who are through and through eaten up with the disease of dishonesty. So there may be a faithfulness where there is much faithlessness; there may be a real Christianity though there are many professing Christians who are but actors before God, and whose clumsy action is laughed at by mocking angels. It is so with the Church. There is a real Church of Christ upon the earth, though many who are in it have no right to serve at its altar and to proclaim its name. So the Apostle says, "What if some did not believe?" Undoubtedly there were unbelieving Jews, rebellious hearts, wills that went away from God in self-seeking, and hungered after darkness and evil, as if they could banquet upon the midnight and revel in the wilderness: shall we, says the Apostle by inference, reject the idea that God is building a nation, because some individual units which he wished to handle are refractory, recalcitrant, impracticable?

"What then? are we [Jews] better than they [Gentiles]?" Everything depends upon Paul's answer to that inquiry. He puts the question, he must give the answer. What is the question?—"Are we Jews better than they Gentiles?" "No, in no wise." Yet this is the man who is supposed to favour a partisan heaven, and to put into heaven whom he pleases; this is the man who is supposed to set one nation on the right hand and another nation on the left hand, without reason, without sound argument, or without condescending to consult the spirit of honesty. Paul has charges against his friends; Paul has been "slanderosly reported" of by many theologians. He wanted if possible to enlarge heaven, to make room for Africa and the islands of the sea, and the benighted places of the earth; nor would he rest until he had told every living soul that God wanted that soul at home. The Apostle does not treat his fellow Jews daintily; he pays them no special compliments; he does not say, Gentlemen Jews, you are all right, you have no care or thought about this matter; you are sure of heaven whatever comes of these aliens and wanderers, these outcasts and desperadoes. Paul rather says, "We have



before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin." So that the advantage was not one of nature; the Jews were not made of better clay; the advantage did not refer to vital partialities: the Jews had the book first, but it was meant to be read, believed, and honoured by the Gentile. In a sense, therefore, the Jew is the servant of the Gentile; he had a priority of responsibility, but not the exclusiveness of privilege. Paul writes an indictment of the human race in verses 10-18:—

"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes."

That is his impeachment. The charge is not made against Jews as Jews, nor is it made against Gentiles as Gentiles; it is made against Jews and Gentiles as men. How energetic he could be! "There is none righteous, no, not one." What of that white-robed priest that stands there as if an incarnation of righteousness? He is as bad, originally, natively, as the man who has not yet begun to pray. "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." Nor is the charge metaphysical, remote, dealing with certain subjectivities that lie beyond common knowledge and general apprehension. The men are not sinners only, they are criminals; "their throat is an open sepulchre," a yawning chasm, opening its jaws in the hunger of hell; "with their tongues they have used deceit:" rather, "with their tongues they are using deceit": the action is immediate and continued; there is no escape from the grammar in the verb which the Apostle used. We may throw our accusations into the perfect and the pluperfect, anyway to get rid of them, by depositing them in some grammatical hole, but the Apostle's verb is a verb of continuance:—they are using, now using, always using, deceit; they are a lie. "The poison of asps"—the poison bag is under the particular tooth with which they bite most severely. This was Paul's conception of human nature. No wonder he wanted a real Gospel. Some of us prefer Paul's

account of human nature to any other. I should be glad to contradict the Apostle if I could do so honestly, but I am bound when his accusation has ceased to roll its thunders to say, There is one man at least of whom that is a full-length portrait. Modify the letters as you may, twist the account into new shape as you may be able ingeniously to do, you cannot alter the heart of it ; the whole accusation is in one sentence—"there is no fear of God before their eyes"; and lost reverence is lost character ; a lost standard of righteousness, living and eternal, is a lost manhood.

The Apostle now proceeds to say a good deal about law. Perhaps we have been misled as to the meaning of his reasoning by this little word "the"; strike out that word, and the whole argument is made broader and stronger. "Now we know that what things soever the law saith"—read, "Now we know that what things soever law saith." "Therefore by the deeds of law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by law is the knowledge of sin." The Apostle is not referring to anything that is written and is to be found within four corners, he is referring to a certain epoch in the evolution of human nature and human thought ; he is referring to the particular time when men began to shape their conduct by statute and precept and code of behaviour, as that they should rise at this hour, and work so long, and within the given hours should do so many deeds, and that such deeds should be rewarded, and such other deeds should be punished : that is law : a mechanical contrivance, an arrangement of discipline, an economy by which men try to train themselves. The thought was a noble one ; and it loses nothing of its nobility from the fact that it is not complete in itself. Here is human nature beginning to see that disorder will not do ; tumult, incohesiveness, mutual repulsion will no longer satisfy the growing instinct and the growing intelligence of man : there must be something constructive, architectural ; some things must be elevated into honour, and other things hitherto permitted must be trampled under foot as base : here we open the page that begins the development of law, order, cosmos, the shaping and regulation of things. The Apostle does not condemn this, but looking upon it he says, you will find this utterly insufficient when you come to vital matters : the law can have no reference



to yesterday ; law can only begin when itself is made known ; the law we did not know yesterday we cannot be judged by : "By law is the knowledge of sin." Law catalogues human actions, enumerates them, indicates their quality, points out all their issue and meaning ; without the law there is no sin ; sin is the transgression of law ; now, continues this mighty reasoner, if you want your souls made right you will have to drop all your little codes of discipline, all your pedantic arrangements, and mechanical contrivances, and rise from law to faith,—a mystery, a miracle, not to be explained in words, but to be felt after the soul has taken that infinite leap.

Thus the Apostle's argument is cumulative and historical. He begins at the beginning ; he knows that the Jews have certain advantages of a temporal kind, he then proceeds to outline human nature as it appears to the eyes of God ; then he puts the great question, How to escape from this nature into the new nature ? And in that action he lays down the rule or doctrine that all further progress, all upward movement is to be inspired by, directed by, and crowned by, the action or Ministry of Faith. He will not allow the Jew to come in by one way and the Gentile to come in by another way ; he does not say to the Jew, You shall come up the front avenue, you shall drive to the portals of your father's house in chariots drawn by steeds of fire, wearing harness of gold ; and you Gentiles must come in at midnight by some unfrequented path, that will be pointed out to you by some condescending person. He says, "There is no difference ; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." How is it to be then ? To be ? By ransom, by sacrifice, by propitiation, "through faith in his blood." Are there those who would have it explained ? They must be denied. Are there those who think of blood, in some narrow, common, vulgar, debasing sense ? Then they do not take God's view of the meaning of the term blood : this is not a murder, it is a sacrifice ; this is not a measurable quantity of hot fluid rushing from the fountains of life, this is an offering—never to be explained in cold words, yet to be felt when the heart is most tender, penitent, broken, self-helpless ; when the heart is in that receptive mood it will know the meaning of the words, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh

away the sin of the world." Where is boasting then? Gone! Who can find it? None. By what law is it excluded? The law of works? No, but by the law of faith,—the new law, diviner, higher, larger law. You thought law was a matter of conduct and discipline, and you based certain measurable economies upon law; now you must grow into the further truth that the true law is faith, and faith is the true law. "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid." Where that word "God forbid" occurs substitute the word "impossible,"—a thing necessarily excluded from the whole line of thought and action. "Yea, we establish the law:" it is because we have come into a higher law through the medium of the lower law, and that lower law has often been a necessary medium, lying on the way to the higher law, the broader and grander law. We do not work now against our strength, as if spending ourselves in fruitless labour; we are not Sisypheus-like, rolling up a stone which comes back faster than we can roll it; on the contrary, having now the spirit of faith, the inspiration of faith, we come back upon all the moralities, and do them easily, musically, lovingly; we establish the law, because we live under the ministry of a higher inspiration. If any man wants to get rid of law he cannot be a Christian: if any man says, Now I can come from the Cross of Christ to do the law more easily and lovingly and obediently,—then we know that he has tasted the bitterness of death with Christ, and has tasted with him the joy of resurrection.

Thus Paul is an Evangelist of the world. He will have all men to be saved. "Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also." Is that a mark likely to partition heaven off into so many tents and arbours for the accommodation of certain inhabitants of Europe to the exclusion of the whole population of Africa? Is that a man who was likely to say to the Gentiles, Nothing can be done for you; the whole universe was constructed for the Jews, and to the Jews it must be given. Hear him: "Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also." Yet this is the man whose name is often quoted as sanctioning the blasphemy that God has predestined some men to be lost.

## Romans iv.

### THE PROMISE TO ABRAHAM.

WAS there ever a heart like the heart of the Apostle Paul ? When he argues he argues with his heart. There is no more superficial criticism passed upon the Apostle Paul than that he was a dry reasoner. His logic is bedewed with tears ; he wants to show how vast, how measureless is the love of God. Yet there have been minds under such hallucination as to wish to make the Apostle Paul the prince of sectarians, the very sovereign of bigots and exclusionists. If there was one thing more than another the Apostle wanted to do, it was to include everybody in this infinite gospel of reconciliation. He had his difficulty with the Jews, because the Jews did not want anybody but themselves to be blessed by any Messiah that might be introduced into the human race. In fact, to the Jew there was no human race ; there was a race of Jews, and what other creatures there might be aping the stature and the dignity of men, such aping was on their part an act of unpardonable impertinence, unless indeed they were willing to be the slaves, the bondmen, the errand-runners of the favoured race. Paul had his difficulty with the Gentiles, for they said, We are excluded, you have nothing to say to us ; we are the offscouring of all things : there can be no Gospel for people such as we are. Paul's task therefore divided itself into rebuke and into welcome : Paul had to rebuke the narrowness of some, and he had to encourage others to believe that even they were human enough to be saved. To the Jews he had to say, Be still ; be no longer vain, conceited, and impiously pious. To the Gentiles he had to say, Be comforted ; a light has arisen in your darkness, there is a hand thundering on the prison-door of them that are bound : Messiah has come to claim the uttermost parts of the earth. See then how he handles his argument, as dealing first with the Jew,

and then with the Gentile ; and see how through it all he is a man full of the Holy Ghost and of force. There is no weakness in all this argument ; if the man's eyes are moist it is not through conscious feebleness, but because he has had a view of the love of God that has surcharged his heart with kindred affection.

Something was given to Abraham, but when was it given ? Was it given before he received circumcision, or after he received circumcision ? The Apostle says, not after he received circumcision, but before he received circumcision. Whatever was given to Abraham was given to Abraham the man, and not to Abraham the Jew : in fact, there was no Jew at that time, the Jew is a later curiosity, the Jew is a subsequent phenomenon. So here when Abraham stands up justified you see the birth of the Son of Man. The transaction was not individual, personal ; it was typical, prophetic, symbolical. This is the key of the Apostle's argument : if something of a Divine nature had been done to Abraham after he had been personalised, circumcised, made into a mere individual, the case would have been wholly different ; but when it was done to him as human, as man, it was done to him typically and representatively, and there began to be the dawn of the glory of the Son of Man upon the earth : —Abraham rejoiced to see my day ; Abraham saw my day, and was glad : Abraham underwent the agony that makes a man more than an individual, giving him a representative, federal, priestly relation to countless multitudes so long as time endures.

Faith is older than law. Love is the oldest of all the forces that rule the spiritual and moral nature of man :—God is love. Those who care for law and invoke law are the smallest of all the animals called to find a lodging-place in the ark of the Divine protection : they are well-behaved people, they are persons who keep a clean slate, and who walk off with conscious pride to show it to the law. Faith indicates another kind of life altogether, quite as cleanly, quite as pure, quite as attentive to all detailed excellence, and yet taking no note of it : because when the bird has sat on the tree and taken food from the branches it turns all the food into the poetry of flying, it turns its earth-given energy into endeavours to reach the sun. Faith is broader than

law. Law gives wages; faith will never take any wages, because the term is a term of measurement and is a symbol of hire, and means a *quid pro quo*, a this for that. Faith never stands at the other side of the counter to take some hireling pence; faith needs no reward that man can give, and no wages that God ever descends to give, or ever could degrade himself to offer: faith lives on God, and in God, and with God, and in a sense faith is God. Faith is more largely rewarded than law. You can pay law, you cannot pay faith; you can pay a servant, you cannot pay a friend; you can pay for legal advice, you never can pay for fellow-suffering, deep, tender, night-and-day sympathy; you can even pay the doctor, but you cannot pay the mother. You can pay what law indicates, you cannot pay what faith does. Faith leaves all; faith says to the law, If there be a law of gravitation I am independent of it: whatever may be pressing me down to the centre of any system, I will by thy grace rise above it, encounter the pressure, throw it off, conquer it, stand above it and make an altar of it. Faith asks no questions, it calls up the ghost. What does faith take with it? Nothing but a staff, and a staff it need not take; yet so long as man has a body he must at least have a shadow to look at; a line, though it be an imaginary line, must be drawn round the globe he is set to live in and to cultivate. You never can make law universal, that is to say, law of the kind now discoursed of by the Apostle Paul. What is law to one man is not law to another: what is morality to one man is not morality to another: that which is right and proper and conventional in one nation is laughed at in another nation as prudish, foolish, narrow, self-idolatrous, vain-glorious, and worthless. You cannot therefore make a mechanical writing to suit all the world. The world, taken in its entirety, its multitudinousness, and representativeness, must have more scope than could be given to it by pen and ink. Moses can write enough upon two mountain slates to keep Israel under restraint and in good order, if Israel will obey: but no firmament the Lord ever made is vast enough to bear upon it all the revelation of his love, and all the possibilities of intelligent and consecrated faith. The Apostle Paul says, Gentiles, you may claim Abraham, because Abraham never received anything as a mere Jew; a mere Jew Abraham never was, Abraham met God as a man; as

a man he received into trusteeship certain covenants, signs, and promises, and as a trustee he held these, not for his own use, but for the good of the world. The Lord himself must begin somewhere: he began with Abraham that he might found in him a household of faith, but though beginning in Abraham it was distinctly with the assurance that the blessing should not be Abrahamic, only in some little personal degree, but human, representative, universal, everlasting: so there is not a pagan anywhere that God is not in search of, that he may by the mystery of the Cross turn into a loving and consecrated child.

Adam is not mentioned. Where is Adam? Who was Adam? What does "Adam" mean? Is it a term of more utility than can be found in its mere etymology? When did Adam live? when did he become aught to the human race? when did he lose his standing? and who took his place? Who came into that place, not by the lot-casting of man, but by the election and appointment of God? Here is Adam's successor, here is the head of the new race up to date, here is the head of the household of faith. Who shall depose Abraham? Only one Man, and the deposition shall not be a degradation but a completion, the kind of abrogation which is wrought by the miracle of autumn on the processes of summer. Abraham is the father of all who believe, but Jesus Christ has come to be the second Adam, the real and true Adam, Man, Son of Man, and in him is concentrated the whole purpose of God; in him, through him, for him, are all things, great, small, more radiant than noonday, and smaller than the meanest pulses that throb in the sanctuary of eternity. Thus all things are working, moving, together in harmonic line; a great process is being conducted, not to-day and to-morrow, but through millenniums. When God moves he carries the ages before him. We have our little calendars, and all we ever did happened the day before yesterday; we have dates, proofs, writings to the effect that such and such a transaction took place in the presence of such and such witnesses. Before God the archangels are young, before eternity aught else than itself is impalpable, invisible. Let the Lord alone: he sitteth on the circuit of eternity: he will vindicate eternal providence and justify his ways to men at his own time. Abraham had two fatherhoods:—"our father, as



pertaining to the flesh," but in the eleventh verse, "that he might be the father of all them that believe." So then Christians are the children of Abraham; the last man that said to Jesus, "My Lord, and my God," was spoken of by the angels in the words of Jesus, "he also is a son of Abraham." We understand the word "Abraham" not in its etymological meaning, not in its local relation, not with regard to time and space of a measurable kind, but symbolically, parabolically, typically, the great poetry and prophecy comprehending the whole counsel of God in relation to the redemption of the world. Some things are given to us in the flesh, some are given to us in faith or in the spirit. We ourselves are as dual as Abraham was: by no one inlet does God bring his revelations into our nature. There are many entrances to the temple of our immortality. This is the mischief, that some men have only one door by which they can receive anything, so that everything they do is done in public, and is done with a commonness which is destructive of sacredness. Some things come to us by the way of reason: we understand them, we ask no questions about them, we can admit them by day or by night, and whether they be admitted or not admitted makes very little difference to our treasure and our wealth. Some things are admitted to us by way of the imagination, that upper door that only God can touch. The schoolmaster builds himself a little hut by the door of our reason, and charges for all the goods he sends in by that entrance; but at the door of imagination who sits but an angel, white clad, with eyes that put out the sun? Some things we can only catch along that higher line of vision and prophecy and thought, that marvellous faculty that takes hold of that which to the reason is nothing, but finds it to be the very line that binds the universe. Some men have no imagination, they therefore will never be tried as defaulters: they have only two eyes, the eyes of the body that can only see things like themselves; they have not those mysterious eyes that see the invisible, and that see the largeness of things, and that can follow the palpitation of spiritual shadows, and give assurance to the world that its madmen are its prophets. Some things we learn at school: they can all be marked down and we can commit them to memory, and recite them, and repeat them so frequently as at last not to know we are repeating them, so

that we can go through strings of unconnected words as if they fell into rhyme. Other things we can only learn in life. No schoolmaster can teach them ; he knows them, but he says to the child, Dear one, thou must learn this in battle, and this thou must learn in sorrow : thy face will not be sculptured into all its meaning but by an invisible hand driving an invisible chisel : go, and the Lord fulfil all thy predictions when the enemy threatens to be too strong for thee : thy pedagogue can teach thee no more ; we have had our day of giving and taking, I have helped thee all I can ; now there is life, go into it, and find what a mystery, what an agony, what a tragedy it is, and if we should be old men together we will talk the story over, and tell what we have learned in that wider school. Some things are just arithmetically, and other things are just sympathetically : the justice of arithmetic is one, the justice of sympathy is another. Whatever you have, you have for the benefit of other people : if you have wisdom you hold it for others, not for yourself ; you are not at liberty to draw down your blinds and light the lamp of your genius and say, How brilliant a flame it makes ! you are rather to go out and say, God has given me all this faculty, all this brilliance, and because he gave it I hold it with a trembling hand, and because I measure it against his glory it is as nothing to me ; but if it can be made of any use to you, poor tear-blinded traveller, here it is, use it, and if you have not strength to hold the lamp, I will go with you and hold it till I see you over your own threshold and safely seated within the security of your own home. Thus the Apostle would tell the Jew that Abraham was more than a mere unit in one particular line or genealogy : thus the Apostle would tell the Gentile that, though he may know nothing of Abraham after the flesh, he may know Abraham after the spirit ; he may set his feet in the footsteps of Abraham, and walk where the grand old prophet walked, and go with him into the same infinite heaven. And all this is to be done by faith, giving the whole self away to the infinite, living the larger life, not peddling over our own affairs, and taking care of them, as if we could do anything with these poor frail fingers. When shall we learn that we can do nothing but by giving ourselves into God's hands, saying, Lord, what a fool I have been ! managing my own affairs all this time, when I might have handed them



one and all to thy care; thy will be done. There must be no mental reserve, no saying, I have said the words, but I have kept just so much in my own hand. No: let go the string; now you have nothing to live on but your faith, and faith never fails. God keeps back nothing from faith:—"Believest thou that I am able to do this?"

The Apostle brings all history into grand harmonic line. He discourses on Abraham, the head of the house; he discourses on law, a temporary convenience, a kind of nurse that took the child to school. The law being a schoolmaster hardly fits the Apostolic meaning: the law was one that went for the child and said, Come with me, and I will take you to school. So the law takes all the little scholars referred to to Christ, and leaves them there: the nurse does not go into the school, it is enough that the nurse should go to the school door, see it open, and the little scholar go in; then the nurse can return home. The law brings us up to the tuition and sovereignty of Christ. The Apostle also brings David in, and makes David sing a sweet little song in the newer house:—"Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute (reckon) sin." We cannot sing these words as David sang them. He came up out of so deep a pit, and through such a tunnel of darkness, that when he got his breath again he sang like an angel. And now Paul is not content to have Abraham and the law and David; if Paul had been a mere Jew he would have said, This is enough: but Paul could not rest there; he says, I want the Gentiles now; I have Abraham and the law, I have David and I have imputed or reckoned righteousness, but I want the heathen for Christ's possession; yea, in the uttermost parts of the earth his face must shine like a blessing. What is the Apostle leading up to? what will be his climax? what his peroration? This inquiry is answered in verses 24, 25:—"If we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." The Apostle never cuts down his argument until he lands it right in the Cross. When he gets there he drops the argument and begins to sing.

## PRAYER.

BLESSED SAVIOUR, we worship thee as our heart's one God. Without thee we are incomplete ; nay, we are less than nothing ; we are shadows without a centre, we are voices of self-contradiction, without wisdom or truth ; but with thee, and as interpreted by thy love, we are sons of God, walking in heavenly light, and having resounding in our hearts most blessed promises. We humbly pray thee to abide with us constantly as the giver of our life, and the supporter of our being ; show thyself unto us by day, flame forth upon us from every wayside bush, and make thyself known unto us in the breaking of our daily bread. Make all common things symbols of high realities, and grant that in every event of life we may so plainly see thine hand as to be led daily to profounder homage and tenderer love. May we in our life show by the wisdom of the serpent, and the harmlessness of the dove, that our instructor is God, and may God be glorified in us by reason of our holiness. We are not content with ourselves, we are sinners before thee ; God be merciful unto us sinners. O thou who dost cleanse man's sin by the precious blood of the Lamb of God, do thou take away every stain of our guilt, and make us without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing ; and grant that by our growth in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, we may live a life that is hidden from the world, we may have meat to eat that the world knows not of, and in our broken heart do thou set up thy blessed temple. Walk with us, abide with us, speak much to us by night and by day ; come to us in the time of our sorrow, and do thou attemper and chasten our joy. Give unto us life more and more abundantly ; thou hast no pleasure in death, thy joy is to give eternal life ; we have tasted of that life and would now eat and drink abundantly. Holy Father, **blessed** Son of God, and coequal Spirit, dwell with us in ever increasing manifestation, show us the purity and love of God, and bless us with the promise of eternal life. Amen.

## Romans v. 1-11.

[“St. Paul has shown,” says *The Speaker's Commentary*, “that neither Gentile nor Jew had attained to righteousness by works (i. 18—iii. 20), he has described the ‘righteousness of God,’ which is exhibited in Christ's atoning death, and bestowed by God's grace as a free gift without works, and therefore without distinction of persons, upon all who by faith accept it (iii. 21—30) ; and he has proved by the example of Abraham, and the testimony of David, that his doctrine of ‘righteousness by faith without works’ is in harmony with Scripture (iii. 31—iv. 25). He now sets forth the blessedness of the justified as consisting in present ‘peace with God,’ and joyful ‘hope of the glory of God,’ both resting on the death and life of him, ‘by whom we have now received the atonement.’”]

1. Therefore being justified by faith [justified therefore by faith], we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ :

2. By whom also we have access [through whom also we have had our introduction] by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

3. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also : knowing that tribulation worketh patience ;

4. And patience, experience [approval] ; and experience, hope :

5. And hope maketh not ashamed ; because the love of God is shed abroad [read "because God's love has been poured out"] in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given [read, "that was given"] unto us.

6. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly [rather, "Christ died in due time for the ungodly"].

7. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die : yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

8. But God commendeth his love toward us, [observe it is "his own love toward us"] in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

9. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

10. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. ["For if, being enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more having been reconciled, we shall be saved in his life.]"

11. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement [read the reconciliation, as in xi. 15, and 2 Cor. v. 18, 19.]

### JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

NO man can understand the fifth chapter who has not read the Epistle from the beginning ; specially is it needful to read the chapter immediately preceding. This is the difficulty of having chapters at all. The Epistle should be read in its argumentative parts as a whole, straight through, from beginning to end, if we would see what a very vehement and tumultuous mind is aiming to say. The Apostle Paul is not a neat writer ; he is urgent, strenuous, pressing on with ineffable energy ; having a goal in view, his great object is to reach it and glorify it. So the Apostle Paul has written many things hard to be understood. Blessed be God, there is no need to understand them in their literal significance ; it is enough to come within the exhilarating and renovating influence of their atmosphere. We know the touch of earnestness ; we are well aware of the difference between painted fire and real fire : it is enough, therefore, now and then to feel the glowing heart of Paul, without pretending to settle his letters in order, which he himself seldom condescended to do.

“Therefore”: that is an argumentative word, connecting what is about to be said with what has already been said, and coming out of what has been said as the flower comes out of the root,—“being justified”: this has unfortunately become a theological term. There is no need that the term should be theologised in any difficult and repellent sense; let us substitute another word:—Therefore being made right,—being rectified, having that which was crooked made straight, having that which was lacking introduced; having now become right—not by works, which it was impossible ever to do, but having become right by a new and greater life, by a sixth sense, called faith—a great and glorious harvest has fallen to our lot. The Apostle has been anxious to wrench from any hands that would greedily and exclusively grasp it the whole message and the whole kingdom of God. The Apostle will deal out his kingdom fairly; he says it belongs to all nations, through all times, and no section of humanity has any right to urge an exclusive claim to the kingdom of grace. He had great difficulty here. It is not comfortable for any man who imagines himself to be elected to have anybody sitting near him whom he does not himself introduce to that high position and that inextinguishable honour. There is nothing more tempting to fallen man than that he should imagine himself to be elected, and should then sit in judgment upon the rest of his fellow creatures, and allocate them to heaven, to hell, as his ignorance or indigestion may permit. The Church has been ruined by its self-elected saints. They are odious every one of them, wholly ill-skinned and ill-favoured and bad at the innermost marrow that is hidden in their bones. The Lord does not know them; they do not begin to understand what is meant by love, redemption, forgiveness, charity, sanctification, heaven; they have been living—if life it may be called—upon the alphabet; and no man was ever fed into great stature and massiveness and majesty of mind by repeating the letters of the alphabet. The Apostle Paul will clear the horizon of all the clouds which sectarian ignorance has breathed upon it. From every point he will have streaming sunshine. He cannot allow that Christ has died for half a world, for then he would be but half a Saviour; he will have the heart of the Son of Man satisfied, and that soul cannot be satisfied while twos and threes are saved

and millions are damned because he himself would not save them. Paul's gospel is more on a heaven than on an earth. No earth could hold it. The earth cannot hold the flowers, they are all trying to escape; the earth holds the roots well, but every flower says as it rises to the sun, I want to go to my native land. So the Lord's Gospel is not sent to this locality or yonder district, but to all the world, in its uttermost parts; the darker the blackness that conceals those parts, the more determined should be the light-bearers to carry the glory where the night is thickest. Faith is a new word, and is much made of by those who first got hold of it. Faith is not an Old Testament word, yet faith had an Old Testament action. Many ages have lived our words before we got hold of the words themselves. Sometimes the later age has to translate the ages that went long before. There will arise in the Church an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures, who will go over the Old Testament with a new pen, who will write upon its margin, fill up all its foot-spaces with rich annotations, and constitute a Church of Faith, where men did not know themselves that they were living the broader and grander life. Some day it may be found that there have been Christians where sectarian imagination never suspected their existence. One day, all glory, the angels' day, time of judgment festival, the King shall say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you,"—for ye are all theologians? nay, not so; that would be rude reading and a small heaven—"for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was sick and in prison, and ye came unto me." How fast he is filling his heaven! It was thus that Christ constituted the true and eternal Church, it was thus that the Apostle went back upon the old records and said, "By faith Abraham . . . By faith Moses . . . By faith"—on through the gleaming calendar until the last saint was named and glorified. The saints would not have known themselves as drawn by the hand of the Apostle. But we must get over this difficulty: we do not know ourselves, we cannot tell what we are doing, what gifts we have, what responsibilities we are discharging: all this has to be revealed to us; it will be for the Lord to say what we have believed, what and how we have preached, what and how we have done down in this time-world, where we are worried by



the vexing and ruthless moments that will not give us scope enough for the play and action of all our passion. Literalists have no standing in Paul's Church, nor have they any foothold in the kingdom of God. Men are not to be measured or weighed in any sense whatsoever in regard to the Cross of Christ, and the grace of our blessed One who saved us with blood. Portraits are not taken in the Church, except by the hand of the Master : and no other man will know himself when the Master paints him. Every time attention is called to the delineation the soul will say, "Lord, when saw I thee an hungred and gave thee meat?" I do not know my own likeness. Nay, saith the Lord, only he who made thee can see thy likeness as it is ; for this is thy beauty, thou child of light, thou wanderer in darkness ; this is what thou wast doing ; this is the apocalypse of thy tears, the uttermost and fullest meaning of thy sighs and alms and prayer. So Paul's Church is a Church large as faith. The little law-doers were all tired. They got no credit, because they never did their works with their hearts. No man can do the law with his heart ; no hireling can call up his heart to do anything. The hireling keeps his eye upon the clock and upon the taskmaster, and if he can stealthily ask some passer-by how goes the time, he will be pleased, because in asking the question he is saved at least one stroke of work : he is a hireling, and there is no speck of sainthood or spiritual beauty and honesty in his continually diminishing soul.

What is the result of being made right by faith? It is a spiritual result, and is indicated in these words: "peace with God"—the great peace. It is as if some wayward world had got out of gear, had slipped the rhythmic process, and had gone out on its own account to revolve and shine independently. The Lord will not permit such revolution and self-originated and self-directed illumination. It is as if attempts had been made to lift that errant world back by some mechanical force,—say of leverage or pulley or screw,—yet the new jointing could not be wrought out by mechanical powers ; then it seems as if the kind spirit of astronomy had been touched with pity at seeing the bootless efforts of this erratic star, and had condescended to come, and by the infinite gravitation which keeps all things right had

set the little wanderer back in its place ; then comes the song of the stars. Therefore now being made right, not by lever and screw and inclined plane or other mechanical device, but being made right by the astronomic genius, by the omnipotent gravitation, now I swing in rhythm with the worlds, and make no jar in the procession of the stars. Many men are trying to lift themselves up, and they are continually falling back into still deeper abysses than those out of which they attempted to extricate themselves : they are writing new schedules of discipline ; they are going to rise earlier, to eat less, to subdue themselves by flagellations newly invented and somewhat cruel in their spirit ; they are going to strike themselves in the eye, and make the flesh feel that it has at last got a master ; so they write out on their blank paper all these little laws, and sketch in legislative enactment new signs and new commandments, in patches of fives and tens : at the end all the little laws have been broken, and all the old schedules must be reduced to ashes, for as long as they come within visual range they are as a rebuke and a stinging reproach to the hands that deftly wrote them, and to the memory that scandalously forgot them all. Not until men are lifted by the Cross, the Christ, the blood mystery, can they have peace with God, with the Infinite, with the eternal requirements, with the eternal claims. All other answers are compromises, concessions, arrangements—things understood to be partial, and to be of the nature of giving and taking ; but there is no peace in them, they do not belong to the household of the stars, they are outside the great eternity of things, and they have no root, and therefore no growth ; time is against them, eternity in its earliest hours will blight their fairness, and reveal them to themselves as children of death. We must have mystery in our reconciliations, great solemn realities about which we know nothing. Woe to the man who can explain his religion ! Until we start from this point we shall make no progress. When a man can explain his religion he has no religion to explain. Faith never explains itself ; faith has no dictionary ; faith does not live in words : it is the five senses all taken up and glorified into a sixth that acts, but never stoops to tell the reason why.

Now the Apostle has “ access by faith into this grace wherein



we stand," and now he calls upon those who have kindred faith to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." The word rendered "rejoice" is in all other cases rendered "boast"; so we might read—"and boast in hope of the glory of God,"—not the boasting of vanity, not the swelling pride of weakness, but a triumphing in eternal realities and assurances, such a sense of the infinite that there ceases to be either time or space, and the soul rests upon the very essence and duration of God.

"And not only so . . . ." The Apostle never can end a sentence. He no sooner gets to a semicolon, which he meant to make a fullstop, than he sees another horizon. It is so with him in some of his superscriptions to the epistles. It is as though the Apostle Paul never could get through a superscription. He no sooner gets access into a larger liberty than he says "And not only so." There is no end to the gifts of God, there is no finality in the kingdom of heaven: we are only satisfied to be dissatisfied, we only sit down to one festival to hunger for another that is already prepared, so that in our hunger there is no pain. What does the Apostle say we do now?—"we glory in tribulations also": sorrow is joy, labour is rest, suffering brings us nearer the Crucified, into sweet fellowship and deeper association with the Man who created Calvary in all its spiritual pathos, and in all its immortal significance. The Christian would not be without pain; he says, To be without pain is to be without the power of understanding my dear Lord; it is through sorrow I see him; it is through pain I hold the largest relations with him: I have come to expect my pain, to welcome it as a guest, because in coming thus it brings the Lord with it in all his tenderest aspects and most consolatory ministries. Is this sentiment on the part of the Apostle? He will answer for himself. He proceeds to show that the presence of this ennobling sentiment in the soul ends in discipline of the severest and yet most useful kind:—"knowing that tribulation worketh patience." Without patience what is any character? an excitement, a spasm, a thing undignified, selfish, urgent because greedy, and energetic because discontented. "Tribulation"—the action of the tribulum upon the heart, the tearing of it fibre from fibre, the infliction of pain upon pain—works out the mystery of patience, longsuffering,

forbearance, a sweet element of character. "And patience, experience": the word rendered "experience" might be rendered "approvedness"; that of which the quality has been tried; that of which the merchantman could say, This is good; it has undergone the last refinement, the quality is approved. We learn by experience. Without experience the wisest man is but a learned fool. Experience keeps a costly school, but there is no great, deep, lasting learning, without going and paying the expense every whit. "And experience, hope": we do not go from one darkness to another, but into a great darkness that we may be startled by an unexpected dawn. "And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Thus we come into a great spiritual estate; thus our inheritance is assured to us in Christ Jesus. That which we thought to be transcendental becomes really experimental; that which we thought to be merely sentimental becomes really disciplinary: and this new quality, force, or ministry, called faith, has ten thousand hands which we put out to claim the promises of God, and everything is filled with uncalculated and everlasting riches. This is the mystery of faith. We must come into this kingdom by the door of conscious self-helplessness. If we do not come in by this door we do not come in at all. There are those who have undertaken to pronounce upon the kingdom of heaven who are only fine gentlemen—as if any fine gentleman could understand the Son of Man. There be those who approach the Son of Man as if to examine him, and form an opinion about him, and weigh him in their scales, and settle his place in the pantheon of the ages. The Son of Man will not speak to them; the Son of Man knows nothing of literary exquisites; the Son of God has no message for those who are merely literary, and who think they can form literary estimates, and write about Christ and Socrates, the Son of Mary and Seneca, as if they were writing about equal characters. No. Say this of him: "He came to seek and to save that which was lost." "The Son of Man is not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."

Romans v. 9, 10.

“Much more then”—“much more.”

A FORTIORI.

THIS is a favourite form of spiritual reasoning. I want the simplest reader to understand what is meant by a somewhat ungainly yet partially self-explaining term, “*a fortiori*.” That is the kind of reasoning which is in great favour in all the Biblical books. Let those who understood the term long before any of us had the remotest idea of it be patient whilst I illustrate it to those less fortunate ones who really do not understand things until they are explained. Let the lightning minds do what they like for a moment or two, but I must insist that the very slowest shall be waited for, and carried forward if he will so permit. “*A fortiori*” is the subject. *A fortiori* means from one strength to another, stronger and stronger, more and more. Thus: If a man is very particular about little things, how much more about great things! That is the meaning of it in substance. Or thus: If a man will risk his life for another, how much more will he put himself to some momentary inconvenience to oblige or assist those whom he loves! It is always—How much more! If he will do a certain great thing, how much more will he do a little thing: or if he will do a little thing, how much more ought he to do the greater thing. Now we are all on a level. Let us see how this *a fortiori* reasoning runs through the Scriptures.

“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” Your fatherhood is a little ladder by which you can climb so far to heaven, to God. Whatever there is good in you, instinctively, naturally, or by any other law and process, that is so much on the way to God; only,

when you have reached the end of your attainment, you are to say, How much more! Then will come in all the revelation of Divine light and beneficence, tenderness and compassion. It has pleased God thus to make us by experience annotators of his own personality and administration. When we would ask profoundly metaphysical questions about the Divine relation to human life and human infirmity, when we would put the puzzle into pompous polysyllables and would darken counsel with a multitude of words, the kind celestial voice says to us, Cease, this is the explanation of the whole of it, namely, "Like as a father . . . ." What do you want with long words and metaphysics, and why should you presume to explain the Divine love in the action of forgiveness? Look within; let instinct interpret theology, let the everlasting love that comes with the child interpret your relation to God and God's relation to you: put away from you all long, intricate, and perplexing terms, and write after all the mysteries of God's action, "Like as a father." Why, that is Christ's inquiry:—"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more . . . ." Human love is but a drop of God's love; human love is but a symbol of God's affection; human love is only a type, an index-finger, a little speck to begin with: when you know its agony, its passion, its pathos, its mystery of suffering; when you have fully comprehended the love that is in your own heart, multiply it by infinity, and say, This is the beginning of the love of God.

Jesus Christ fashions another inquiry upon the same line of reasoning; he says, "If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" Man's temper is tested by circumstances. Here you have men struggling against difficulty, persisting in quenching the oppositions of nature; here you have men so obstinate that they have determined to overcome all natural difficulties and barriers: if they will do these things when circumstances are against them, and all nature seems to testify against their purpose, what will they do when everything falls easily into their hands? If they can climb the mountains in this way, how easily they will run down the valleys; if they can fight against nature, instinct, reason, family association, pastoral solicitude and guidance, how much more will they fall into the

ways of the world when they live in the world sympathetically, and when all surrounding companionships constitute an environment of sympathy ! There are men who have wrought wonders in the green tree—sappy, juicy tree ; they have burned it, they have dried up all the blood of the plant, and have gone on towards conflagration and annihilation. There are men who have lived down all the mystery of the love of home. There are souls that have torn out of themselves every holy memory : if men can do these things when God seems to have surrounded them with saving and redeeming influences, what can we expect of those who are born in darkness, born in poverty, and who were doomed from the day of their birth to carry heavy loads and to toil under sweltering suns ? Thus the Lord Christ, *sweet Teacher, Sister-Monitor*, comes down to spell out all things to us, saying, Open your eyes and see life in its daily aspects, in its continual mutations, and learn that within all the evolution of providence, sanctified or perverted, there is a revelation of God, thought, law, destiny. Why, if the pen-and-ink Bible were burned, God is rewriting it every page on the scroll of the passing days.

Another inquiry the Saviour bases on the same line of reasoning. They are all looking round and admiring the beauties and wonders of nature, and Jesus says, Who clothed this field with grass ? The disciples said, The Lord our God did this. Then Christ retorted, being swift in all spiritual reasoning and tremendous in all moral application, "If then God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith ?" Find your theology in the grass ; find the defence of your faith in every bird that flies ; erect the fair lilies into fair altars, and bow down before them and say, As God made this lily and takes care of it, so he made me and so he will preserve my life ; yea, I will say to grass and lily and flying bird, How much more have I than any of you, being a man—a transcript of God ! Thus the Saviour would keep us always on a line of fact and reason. He would have us build our house upon a rock ; not upon the sand of speculation or the bog of nightmare, but upon the realities of things round about us doth Christ build the tabernacle of God,



Thus we have to be very careful how we admit anything to Christ. He is so skilled in the use of the *a fortiori* method of reasoning that if we admit anything, the very smallest, he will hale us, take us into custody, land us in the court of God, there to be acquitted or condemned. You must not admit that God clothes the grass of the field, or Christ will lay his fingers upon your shoulder and say, How much more will he clothe this framework, this house which dwells until the rickety old roof is blown off by the winds of age. O fools, and slow of heart! have you a Father fond of the grass of a day's duration but neglectful of the souls into which he has breathed immortality? Jesus Christ does not ask our assent and consent to some profound theological proposition, which we but partially understand. If we allow that we breathe, he will compel us to pray. We had better admit nothing in Christ's court; but he will turn our dumbness into a charge against us; yea, he will reproach and taunt and upbraid and banter us like a diviner Elijah, because he will charge us with theft; having received all these things of good nature, sweet nature, all-bountiful nature, we dare not open our lips and say, Thanks to the anonymous donor!

Changing the line of illustration for a moment, we come upon a passage of this kind which leads us in the same direction, namely, "Howl, fir trees; for the cedar is fallen." Thus the argument is brought down instead of being made to ascend. If God can crush the suns and throw away their dust, wilt thou set up against him thy poor tottering bones, thou child of yesterday? Thou art consumed before the moth. If he hath torn up the cedar by the roots, is he unable to disturb the daisy that grew under its shadow? The mightiest die, shall the frailest live for ever? And is there not a cautionary eloquence in this admonition. When the noblest voices cease, what hope is there for the world in voices that have neither their range of eloquence nor persuasion? If the leaders in the army fall, what of those who can only go in proportion as they are assured of a heroic captaincy? If the trustees of social honour should prove faithless, how dare we of no name or standing in the marketplace venture to say that the honour of the world is safe in our custody? If Samson has had his eyes put out, who is the cripple that dare

come forward and say he will fight the Philistines and blind them? This voice of caution comes from the grave of the heroic dead. "Howl, fir trees; for the cedar is fallen."

With this brief reference to the Old Testament we hasten back to the New, and we find the Apostle Paul adopting the Christly method of reasoning:—"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.\* For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

We always think that Christ's work ended on Calvary: it only began there. We think that Christ has completed all his work when he has saved the sinner: that is only the beginning of the priesthood of the Lord, "much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." The whole Logosity is with us, the ineffable mystery of the Word dwells in us, and we are pilgrims hastening to a city out of sight, founded, lighted, kept by God. We have lost this "Much more then." It has been enough for us to say we are saved by Christ, and to have lived a kind of cripple's life. Oh, that we had kept his law, and hearkened unto his commandments, and availed ourselves of the whole love of the Cross! for then had our peace flowed like a river, and our righteousness had been as the waves of the sea. We have

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\* "St. Paul has been showing that the hope of glory cannot fail, because it is founded on God's love, as manifested in the death of Christ (vv. 5-8). He now draws out more fully the force of this argument, by contrasting past circumstances with present.

"Then we were sinners, now we have been justified by Christ's blood; if he died for sinners, much more certain is it that he will save the justified.

"The expression '*justified by his blood*,' is worthy of note.

"(1) Why is no mention made of faith?

"Because St. Paul is here viewing justification simply as a proof of God's love; and faith adds nothing to the gift of God, but only accepts it.

"(2) It might be inferred from iv. 25, that our justification is less closely connected with our Lord's death than with his resurrection; that such an inference would be erroneous is at once shown by the words, '*justified by his blood*.'

"In fact, in one of its aspects, 'justification of sinners comes to the same with remission' of sins."—*The Speaker's Commentary*.



lived superficially when we might have lived profoundly; we have taken a little when we might have taken much. "Eat and drink abundantly" is the welcome of the Divine hospitality. We are not called to little things but to great things. "Much more, being reconciled"—having gotten our pardon by the blood of the Cross, having been dismissed from the category of rebels—"we shall be saved by his life"; eternity shall pour its inexhaustible fountains of energy and solace into our souls, and we shall not know weariness because we know not the pain of mortality. Why this little life? this narrow, desiccated, pitiable existence? We are called to have life, and to have it more abundantly, as if God would say, Enlarge your capacity, and I will fill it: or, Receive my gift of life and that will enlarge your capacity, and then your growing commodiousness of manhood shall receive increasing manifestation of the Divine presence and grace. Grow in grace. He giveth more grace, he giveth grace upon grace. Why sit and sigh and deplore your littleness, when the inheritance is at hand and may be seized by the gracious violence of love at any moment?

The Apostle uses the same form of reasoning when he says about certain persons, "They do it to obtain a corruptible crown," as if he would say, How much more shall we do it to obtain a crown incorruptible. If men can put themselves to these actions of self-denial for the sake of something that is fluttering and withering and transitory, how much more should we be on the alert, and how much more should we avail ourselves of spiritual discipline, when our aim is not a faded bay-leaf but an eternal amaranth, the green that grows in Paradise?

One more illustration will show you how rich the Bible is in this form of reasoning. You can find many other instances. To preachers I would say, find them and amplify them: there you have a bank on which you may draw for ever. And to those who are in search of further religious experience and wisdom I would say, collate all these passages, and see how God reasons with men, and urges them by persuasions founded upon their own admissions. How fond we are of quoting the passage—"Bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable

unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Why, there is a concealed *a fortiori* reasoning in that very passage. It is not, "Bodily exercise profiteth little." This indeed does stand in our version and therefore we have said, It is of no use; ceremony and ritual and penalty self-inflicted, all these amount to nothing, we should seek after godliness. That is not the Apostle's reasoning at all. He ought to be thus translated:—"Bodily exercise profiteth a little:" it has its good, it has its quality, it is useful; bodily exercise profiteth an inch, but godliness profiteth infinity.

Is there no line of practical reasoning for us? Shall I be for a moment a feeble Elijah and taunt the idolaters of Baal? Shall I mock you? How many men in London we could all justly mock in the spirit and power of Elijah! Here is a man who has insured the house but not the tenant. Here is the same man, who may have insured the tenant's body and left the tenant's soul a vagrant, a felon, an orphan! O fool, and slow of heart to interpret the meaning of the best practical reasoning! I am insured as far as my house is concerned; all the building, the structure, the furniture, the works of art, and the plate are insured as far as possible; I am a prudent man; I have insured my life, I have made provision for my family in this way, for I am a prudent man. And your soul? He has forgotten his soul! Is he wise? Is this your marketplace prudence? Are you men of business? I mock you, taunt you; I say, Cry aloud to your life policy; it is a policy, what will it do for mind and heart and soul and eternity? Here is a man who is guarded against thieves, burglars; he has a bolt at the top of the door, and a bolt at the foot of it, and a lock in the middle of it, and an iron bar that goes across it diagonally; and therefore he can go to rest with security. What have you done for the protection of your mind against evil suggestion, against the burglars of the soul, against the poison-blowers that come in through publications of many kinds, or through conversation, or through music, or through art of other sorts? What have you done to protect yourself against the burglars? Here is a man who has protected himself against disease. He says he is a sanitary reformer; he has made wonderful arrangements underground

and overhead for the prevention of disease; what have you done for the prevention of disease in your soul, keeping out evil spirits, keeping out temptations, keeping out malign suggestions, keeping out the devil? What if you have succeeded in shooting down a hundred little boy-burglars and have admitted the prince of hell? I will not have you called prudent men, but adult fools, consummately educated in the school of folly.

When we see the trees coming out in vernal beauty, the great bulbs on the chestnut trees, and the little green prophecies upon many a black branch of other trees, and when we see some early adventurous almonds almost out in their fullest spring costume, we ask, Is God, able to raise again these trees, unable to raise our dead? Is he a God of limited omnipotence. Shall we thus put his power into paradoxical expression, and twit him with the irony of almightiness that can only do part of the work? Is he great at the resurrection of trees, and does he fail at the resurrection of lives? Shall thy dead men live again? If a man die shall he live again? Will there be any voice penetrate the past and bring up all the holy, saintly beauteous dead? Do they go to help the roots of the trees only, or will they somehow be brought back again, so that the corruptible may put on incorruption and the mortal put on immortality? O thou God of the trees, our hope is in thee, wherefore we say, If God can so raise again the trees of the field for their little annual exhibition of beauty and growth of fruit; how much more—. Then do we stand in the centre of the cemetery, and say, O Grave, where is thy victory?

## PRAYER.

**LIVING GOD,** and God of all living, save us from death. Show us, by increasing our life, that thy great purpose is to bring us into a great and glorious immortality. Deliver us from our own notions of life and honour, and help us to live in joyful obedience to thy will. Specially teach us that it is in thy power to make death itself the servant of life, and show us that, by thy mysterious law, that which we sow is not quickened except it die. Teach us that we ourselves must die before we can truly and for ever live. Lord, slay us with thine own sword, that we perish not by the hand of the devil ! Our hope is in crucifixion with Jesus Christ. With him would we humbly say, Not our will, but thine, be done ! Thou hast severely yet graciously chastised us when we have sought to walk in our own light, and to turn away from the brightness of thy face. Thou hast punished us by allowing us to have our own way. We have put our feet into the nest of the serpent, and drunk greedily at poisoned wells ; often have we mistaken the coiled scorpion for an egg, and been stung for our own ignorance and foolhardiness. We said unto the darkness, " Let there be light," but the darkness gave no heed to our voice ; we commanded the waters to stand back in heaps, but the floods despised us ; we smote the rock that we might find in it the cooling stream, but the flint made no answer to our rod : thou, Lord, must go before us to make all our way plain—thou must teach us—thou must overrule all our desires—thou must inspire the prayer and then satisfy it with blessing. Not our will, but thine, be done ! Blind, we cannot see things as they really are ; deaf, we hear not all the feet and wings that are for ever busy about our way : Lord, see for us and hear for us, and teach us what to do ; and wherein we are stiff-necked and self-sufficient do thou break us down by the most humbling disappointments, and by the bitterest mortifications. We see but parts of things—thou seest round the whole universe ; we hear but the sounding of the present hour—thou hearest the voices of all the future :—O Lord of Hosts, O God of ages, O Spirit of eternity, Not our will, but thine, be done. Amen and Amen.

## Romans v. 15.

" If through the offence of one the many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto the many."

## THE TWO ADAMS.

**T**HIS is a parallel. Let us honestly inquire what it means. Let us have no special pleading, no evasion of the solemn issue ; let us ask ourselves earnestly, Is this parallel a piece of

run away from it. Many persons have walked round about this text, and have been very emphatic upon one of its members, and have treated the other part of the text as if it had but a remote and worthless relation to the general apostolic argument. If men could really believe this in their hearts, night would be dead, and there would be no more pain, no more sea, and no more trouble, and no more earth, or time, or sense, or enemy. So large and so bright is the heaven which lies within our reach ! "If through the offence of one many be dead"—our theologians are very firm there, they will have no trifling at that point ; they will not allow that one soul made in the Adamic likeness lives : but some of the theologians do not advance into the "much more" which follows that declaration—"much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many." Why refuse to enter that great door of love and hope ? We do not glorify God by narrowing the opportunities which he has set before the soul ; we do but drag down the eternal God to the stature and worthlessness of an idol when we attempt to worship him in this way, as if he were great in destruction but reluctant or half-hearted in salvation. We do not see the meaning of the words as they stand in the Authorised Version : "If through the offence of one many be dead" is in the Revised Version "if through the offence of one the many be dead,"—"the many" standing for all. So what Christ hath done, "hath abounded unto the many," the same number ; the Apostle is not dealing with the one number in the left hand and another number in the right hand ; it is in both hands the many, the all, the sum-total Man. But you cannot whip your theologians into that second part. They think they glorify God by destroying some men at any rate : there must be some destruction, although the text says that, if through the offence of the one, the many be dead, "much more"—words that cannot be explained—shall the righteousness of the One, the Second Adam, abound unto the salvation of the many, the total Man. Theologians of this kind are thieves and robbers ; they come to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. They are not servants



of the Good Shepherd who gave his life for the many, who became a ransom for the many,—not for many only, as giving a proportion, and even a major proportion, but for “the” many, the multitude, the total sum called humanity.

It is very marvellous to see the Apostle's handling of the mystery of sin. He will not allow sin large scope; he will not allow redemption and sin to sign on the same page, as if they were exactly coeval in duration; he snubs the intruder called sin. According to the Apostle's idea, the sin is a question of time; it is an incident of the present; it is a blight upon space; it is a wound inflicted far beyond the purpose of God. When God dreamed his universe he never dreamed sin. We must not allow sin eternal ranges; sin is not a pendulum which oscillates between eternity and eternity; sin struck our little world at a given moment—redemption never did. That is the difference between the sin and the redemption. Sin is a time incident; redemption never can be that: sin is something that happened; redemption is part of God, and therefore never happened, in the sense of historically occurring; it was manifested, it became part of our outward history, but in the spirit of it, in the poetry and love and meaning of it, God's own eternity is the measure of redemption. We must never allow ourselves to think that sin came out of eternity: it is dignifying sin infinitely too much: but redemption is part of the Divine nature; God lives to heal, to reconstruct, to call back, to edify—that is, to build up an everlasting masonry of souls. The Lamb died from before the foundation of the world. What we call the foundation of the world was laid but yesterday; the devil's range is measured by one stormy night; God's love belongs to God's eternity.

Sin has done much in the way of what we now call developing God. But for the sin we should never have known the Cross. Sin has brought redemption to light. We say life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel, which is of course true; but there is a deep sense in which redemption is brought to light by sin. We do not know what God is until our sin-sick soul cries for him in the bitterness of self-detestation. But sin is not as old as redemption, notwithstanding. Sin has revealed God,

shown us what God is, in tenderness, in sympathy, in mercy, in longsuffering, and in patience. Sin was once a surprise ; in very deed, it simply happened. The sinner was surprised at his own guilt. Redemption comes to us through all the breathing of eternity, through all the hopefulness and poetry and joy of spring, through all the vineyards of summer, through all the largesses and bounties and hospitalities of autumn. The spirit of redemption has always been at work. No sooner has one part of nature done an injury than all the rest of nature has come like a kind doctor to heal the wound : if the lightning has struck the tree, already nature seems to be the tenderer for it in its relation to that tree ; and instantaneously, hardly has the flash passed, until the healing, redeeming, motherly spirit has taken the tree in charge, to heal it, to cover up the wound that can never be fully repaired, and to grow on the barrenness of the scathed trunk some flower, or festoon, or touch of beauty that shall make the best of what appears to be an injury. God is love. Not, God once became loving ; or, God was surprised into love : but, God is himself, in his essence, in his spirit, in the necessity of his Deity, God is love. So we have found him Shepherd, Mother, Physician, Friend, coming to heal and cure and re-establish and reconstruct things : and will he cease until he has completed his work ? Is it like him ? Has he left any star half-rounded, any system of light half-built ? Has he been baulked in some miracle, or frustrated in some dream and effort of love ? We must never allow God's sovereignty to be delimited or broken in upon ; he must never lift a broken sceptre, or he ceases to be Lord. Redemption has always been in the world in one of two aspects ; either in the aspect of preservation, or in the aspect of reconstruction. In the aspect of preservation, redemption is a spirit that brings up the sun every morning and sees him safely over the ocean line every night, and trims the starlamps one by one, and watches over all living things with tender solicitude. That is not the spirit that becomes romantic or heroic in history, it is the quiet motherliness that keeps the house together. Motherliness has no fabulist to dwell romantically upon its charms and doings, yet it is the only romance that is worth talking about. Or redemption comes in the aspect of reconstruction ; then there is business, then there is activity,



then there are visible arrangements and rearrangements, and people say, What is this that is proceeding? Here is smiting and healing and restoring, and rejoining, and elevating in the sense of edification, until some architectural purpose be brought to consummation by the onplacing of a copestone and the shouting of men and angels. Of that side of redemption we say much, all our hymns are created by that aspect of affairs; the other side of redemption lies wellnigh unsung; perhaps in eternity it will not so lie, but will be the inspiration of our music: for it is the motherliness that keeps the house together, that becomes on occasion the tragedy that snatches the world from hell by the power of a Cross. It is the same spirit, the same love, the same tender, holy mercy.

What is the general idea of the work of Christ in the world? It is a poor idea. It is nowhere sanctioned in Scripture, and certainly is nowhere sanctioned by Christ himself. The representations of popular theology upon this point would be to this effect: Yonder is a ship overwhelmed in the sea; she cannot help herself, she is broken, shattered, fated to die; here is One, mightier than all others, radiant as the summer, gentle as the very spirit of peace, who goes out walking upon the waves, and advances towards the ill-fated ship, and supplies captain and crew and passengers with a gigantic saving apparatus, saying: Use what I now give you, and you will be able to swim to shore; if you use these arrangements you will be saved, if you do not use them you will be lost! All I can do is to offer you a gigantic and elaborate and costly apparatus of a saving kind. That is not my Gospel. I reject the figure. It is too mechanical to cover all this great necessity; it is an invention which a manufacturer might have imagined. This is not eternity. What then does this Christ of God, whom we worship as God the Son, do? He takes away the sin of the world. He saves the world. He does not try to save it, he does not make a compromise with it, he does not say, We will do the best we can under disastrous circumstances. No, he saves the world. That is eternity. That covers the tragic need, that is a Gospel which thrills the world with life and hope. It is a saved world we live in, and we are saved men. Do not mechanise

this great thought and artificialise it, as if it were some process in arithmetic, or some new science of legerdemain suited to the peculiar constitution of the soul. "As by one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so"—how can you treat one side of the case as if it were large to completeness, and treat the other side of the case as if it were partial, not to incompleteness, but to deficiency and conscious defeat? Read the words, speak them all, here they are—"As by one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the obedience of the one, shall the many be made righteous." The devil is to have nothing. Not a bone shall he take away at the last. Not one little child shall he steal from the household, saying, with infernal laughter, This I have got, and with this I will constitute mine hell. When this consummation is to take place who knows? Ours is not a time God, ours is a time devil. The God whom we adore is from everlasting to everlasting; of his mercy it is said, it endureth for ever.

Is the world saved? Certainly. And yet God has never taken from man the power of suicide. If man could not commit suicide, he would not be man. Every angel in heaven must have the power to leave heaven, or he is not a moral agent; he is only a cog on a mechanical wheel, he is only a pulley or a screw in some gigantic piece of mechanism. The oldest archangel, the archangel that broke the solitude of God, must have the power to commit suicide, or he is no son of God; he is but some mechanical agent that has no control over his own spirit or his own worship, and therefore his reverence is worthless, and his song but a sigh of servility. As you can leave the first Adam so you can leave the Second. But you have to undo the Cross before you can go to hell. Understand that we are not people who have no relation to the Cross, and therefore can go to hell by some swinging method, and be able to say ages hence, If we had seen the Cross we would have worshipped the Sufferer. In all Christianised countries men have now to go to perdition, if they go at all, over a place called Calvary. Let them go! So great is moral agency, so mysterious is the nature of man, that he can shut his eyes when the sun shines, he can say No, to God; he can hurt his own mother; he can die and perish. This

makes all the difference between the statement of the case. If the Cross were only of effect, and if it only developed responsibility in relation to the degree in which it is intellectually perceived by men, then men, by closing their intellectual eyes, could throw off the larger portion of responsibility; but the Cross is here as the all-important fact, the world is saved by that Cross; what the first Adam did has been undone by the Second Adam, and now if any man will ruin himself he must ruin himself in the very presence of the Cross of Christ. This makes sin doubly sinful. If herein we magnify the universality of God's love we also herein show how aggravated is human sin. It is no longer a slip, a lapse, an infirmity of moral conduct, a speck upon the surface; such sin as ours goes down to the pit of darkness, saying, The last thing I saw was Christ's Cross, and Christ's face, and I said to the bleeding Son of God, Begone! I am going to hell. That is how it stands with us now. Here is a fact to be overcome, the fact that the Second Adam has saved the world, and the fact that man, being a moral agent, has of necessity the power of suicide, and has exercised that power as if it were a right.

Let me speak plainly to myself, and therefore speak plainly to others, about this matter. We have treated the Cross as if it were something to be intellectually discussed, whereas we ought to treat it as the fact of Salvation. The parallel has no meaning, if the world is not as much saved by Christ as it was lost by Adam. Christ will not be defeated; he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied. How large is man? How do you measure him? Is man all body? Then he is so many measurable feet and inches. Where did man come from? From the dust? Only partly. God made man out of the dust of the ground, but he breathed into him that which is not dust, and man became—became! oh that wondrous word; word of growth, word of progress, word of development!—he became a living spirit. What is his magnitude now? He can tell who knows the bounds of eternity. He knows what man is who knows what God is: for man has in him the afflatus, the breath Divine, the wind that cometh from heaven. How, then, is man to be treated? Is he to be treated in his smaller relation or in

his larger relation? If he be a creature of time, we can easily settle the case; if man be a denizen of heaven or of eternity, if he be a citizen of infinity, then we must not cut off his citizenship as if it belonged to time and space. The words "time and space" have victimised us; they are terms of limitation: with God there is no time, with God there is no space; the Eternal, the Infinite, are the consummation of terms which are given to us to be used as mere conveniences. Everything, therefore, depends upon what you make of man. If your man is body, you can deal with him within time limits, for to those limits he pre-eminently belongs; we were present at his making, and there is no reason why we should not be present at his extinction: but if man be more than body, if he be spirit, if he be akin to God, will God leave him, saying, I gave you eternity on earth, but I can do nothing more for you now that you have shed the body. When a man has shed the body, has he died? Is he gone, all gone? He has dropped the mortal coil, and can God touch him no more? Who can believe it, or receive it, or be satisfied with it?

We come back to the expression which we find repeated from verse 15 to verse 20—"But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." How boundless! Tell me that sin cannot hunt my soul into eternity, and I will, I say, Praise God! But tell me that God's love can only deal with me in time, and will have no more to do with me simply because I have got rid of the body, and I am at least smitten with an infinite amazement. But if any man shall say, "Well, then, I will trust to eternity, and I may be saved there," that man commits suicide. There is the difference between reality and unreality, sincerity and insincerity. If a man shall say, Then I will play the devil's game as long as this body lasts, and when I get rid of that I shall attend some sanctuary in the other world, a man that can talk so cannot be saved; his is the unpardonable sin. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation": "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." It is impossible for a man to make terms with the devil, to serve him all his time, and then to say, with mental reservation, I will see about God in eternity. God is not mocked!

## PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY God, we bless thee that through Jesus Christ our Lord we are citizens of a heavenly kingdom. We bless thee for thine own sovereignty, for the monarchy of the Saviour, and for the rule of God the Holy Ghost. Once we would not have Christ to reign over us, now we cry, We will have no other king. Jesus is now to us King of kings, Lord of lords; the name is written upon his vesture and upon his thigh; behold, his throne is above all. May he rule in us, may he be our Master and Lord. We would learn the sweetness of obedience; help us to say always, Not my will, but thine, be done. Thou canst work this miracle in us. This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts. We cannot work it in ourselves; we are rebellious, self-reliant, we mistake the near for the great, and the present for the eternal; we are full of error: Lord, help us by the mighty grace of thy Holy Spirit to say constantly, Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven. Help us to understand the kingdom of which we are subjects; enable us to feel its spirituality, to realise its nearness, its greatness, its divineness. Being subjects of such a crown, may we walk worthy of the kingdom of which we are members; may our conduct be good, noble, useful; may men constantly take knowledge of us that we have been in the garden with Jesus, that we have learned of Jesus, that we know his spirit, that we obey his command. Save us from all little, narrow, uncharitable, and unworthy notions of thy kingdom, thou who didst die to reign; may we not misrepresent thy rule, rather being taught by thy Holy Spirit may we present it to the world so that it may eventually become accepted of men. Lord hear us, behold our tears when we are in grief, behold us when we are weary through weakness, comfort us when all life is desolate; and bring us through all the wondrous experience of this poor grey cold time to see the meaning which thou hast hitherto hidden from our imagination, the meaning of thine own heaven. Amen.

## Romans vi. 8.

"Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him."

## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO PAUL (continued).

THIS weary but necessary "if" meets us once more. "If we be dead with Christ"—but is any man dead with the Saviour? Perhaps not. He is not dead because he has retired from the world. Monasticism is not self-extinction. But does



any man wish to die with the Saviour? That is enough, in the meantime. Not "if we be dead"—we are all dead in trespasses and sins; that is not the death referred to; the qualifying words are—"with Christ." Were we crucified upon his Cross? Have we known the fellowship of his sufferings? We may be dead to the world, and yet not dead with Christ; we may have retired from the world in mere sullenness and misanthropy, stung by a thousand disappointments; such withdrawal from the world is not death, in the sense in which Paul uses that term. We must consent to our own death; we must wish to die; we must feel that in going with Christ to the Cross we are fulfilling, not a momentary election of our own, but the very purpose of God before the world began.

This is a great mystery. Vulgarity has no status here; this lore can only be learned in the inner and upper school where the Holy Ghost alone is teacher. Paul's joy breaks out upon every possible occasion. He is bound to recognise the darker facts of life, but he no sooner recognises them than he finds in them only the shadow of some great joy. That principle of interpretation is realised in this verse. "Now if we be dead with Christ"—there all is gloomy, solemn, tragical, awful—"we believe" is that a word of hesitancy, or a word of confidence? Sometimes we say, "We believe so," when we are not certain about it; we do not affirm it, we simply attach a certain amount of credence to it—"We believe so." When the word is thus used, it is a word of little consequence in Christian education. Paul uses it as a word of confidence, triumph. "We believe"—we are sure, we live in the assurance—"that we shall also live with him." What is Paul's idea? It is that Christ and the Christian have the same fate. If Christ is dead, we should be dead too; if Christ lives, we shall live with him; if Christ has gone out into eternal extinction, we shall follow him into that infinite nothingness: but if Christ has a throne he will find on it a seat for every one who has trusted his Cross and followed his law. This was Christ's own method of teaching; he said, "Where I am, there ye may be also." How wondrously Paul works upon that connective word "also"! We cannot read the chapters immediately connected with this text without finding



Paul always erecting that bridge. As with Christ, so also with the Christian. If, then, we would discover our own fate or destiny, we have simply to inquire into the fate or destiny of Christ. If we are one with him he will find us, we shall find him, and we shall spend eternity together. This is the Christian's confidence. Hence the Christian's joy. Christianity never carries out its argument without carrying out its music also.

Take the Gospel according to Paul at another point :—"Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (vi. 18). This is more than a play upon words. In the first instance we have emancipation :—Being made free from sin—free from the law, which is the creator of sin—ye became the slaves of righteousness. Grace does not mean liberation from service. Roughly interpreting the Christian life and temper of the day, one would suppose that a man has only to unite himself in Christian fellowship in order to escape all Christian responsibility. Whilst he was an anxious inquirer, he spent days and nights in assiduously asking questions concerning the way to the kingdom of light and liberty, but no sooner was he persuaded that he had found that kingdom than he sat down, took his ease, lived upon the empty past, and fed himself upon the wind. Let every man examine himself herein. To unite with a Church is only to begin the Christian life. When we say we believe the Son of God, we simply put our hands upon the plough, we do not take them off ; we begin the war, we do not cease it. Addiction to sin is bondage ; so also is the service of righteousness : only we must never forget that there are two kinds of bondage—one servile, humiliating, degrading ; the other consenting, joyous, unanimous. Love is slavery. There is no one so much in bondage as the one who is most deeply influenced by love : there is no night there, there is no more sea, there is no need of the candle, call it moon or sun. Love is its own light ; love thinks nothing a hardship by which it can promote its own deepest and sublimest purposes. This is the slavery of Christ. To be Christ's slave is to be God's free man.

Take another instance of the Gospel according to Paul :—"What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now

ashamed ? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life" (vi. 21-22). The picture is that of two harvests. Paul will judge everything by the end. What does it come to when it is all told ? is Paul's searching and unfailing inquiry. Not, How does it go in the process, what are its occasional excitements and exhilarations ? but, When all comes to all, what is the end of conduct ? He first looks at the field of sin and says, This harvest is death : then he looks at the field of grace, and he says, Behold the abundance of the fruit ; and this fruit is unto holiness, the end of this harvest is everlasting life. Paul was practical ; Paul would judge religions by their results. He would not say a religion was false simply because he did not understand it. Paganism was not false to Paul because he had not been trained in it. Paganism was part of a great education. Christianity takes up poor blind Paganism and leads it into the light. Thus Paul treated the men of Athens ; he said, Ye have come to the point of the Unknown ; it is here that Christianity begins. From that point of ignorance he led his hearers on to points of religious consciousness and realisation. What does your life come to ? is then the solemn inquiry. Judged by this standard, Christianity has nothing to fear. It turns out the grandest men in the world. Every Christian ought to be a sublime character, a monument of honour and of nobleness. Not every professing Christian. Some of the meanest souls in the world have professed Christianity hypocritically. Yet I care not how humble the lot and how poor the circumstances of a real Christian, you will find in him the point of nobility, the seal of royalty, somewhere. He will wear well. The electro will wear off ; the silver is good to the last thread.

Take another instance without changing the line of thought :—  
"But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held ; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter" (vii. 6). Still serving ; never given over to mere wantonness or licence of life ; but still under the discipline of the grace of God. This is larger serving. It is impossible for a man to do as well for you as he would do for himself. The most honest man cannot serve his employer as

he would serve himself. He thinks he does : but he cannot. Have you searched into that point of necessity ? It is not want of will, it is not want of honesty, it is not want of faithfulness and vigilance, not one word do we say to the detriment of the man's character ; but a man cannot work so well or so long for another as he can do for himself. Yet this is not selfishness ; it is the larger realisation of a man's own nature. I do not speak of the hireling, for he is the meanest of all reptiles. Never speak a good word of any hireling. By "hireling" I mean the man who renders only eye-service ; the man who does not consider his work, but the wages ; the man who is all the morning long asking what time it is. Have no faith in him ; do not trust him ; watch him at every point : he is a thief even when he is honest. I am speaking of the man who does not really know himself until he is cast fully upon his own resources. When you were receiving wages you were not doing probably one half the work you are doing now that you are paying them. You never did for your employer what you are doing for yourself ; and you know it. Working for yourself, you never look at the clock, you see another opportunity and seize it ; you take your business even into your dreams. You have come into a larger service, without subjecting yourself to one tittle of just accusation for neglect, even when you were under other circumstances. You cannot do so much for a stranger as you can do for your own child ; you cannot sit up so long at 'night, you cannot revive your energy so continuously. Here we touch the very divinest element in man, the eternal love that lives to invent new opportunities for its own exercise. We have come into service, larger service, and if we have escaped literal discipline it is that we might be brought into obedience to spiritual sympathy, which is immeasurably larger than any mere discipline can be. It is right that we should bear the yoke in our youth, it is right that we should have difficulty with our alphabets and primers. As we have said before, there is no reading in all the world so hard as the alphabet, and yet we have come to speak of this and that as being "as easy as A B C." We thus indicate our own growth, we have passed from discipline into sympathy ; we have passed from the parsing of words into the grasp of thoughts. We are no longer the victims of a merely mechanical orthography, syntax,

or prosody; we know the writer's meaning, we enter into the writer's spirit, we know the writer's signature. He can no longer be kept away from us, and no substitute can be palmed upon us; we live in him, we breathe his breath, we are in sympathy with his soul. Something like this the Apostle means when he says we serve "in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." The letter measures duty; the letter is a clock; and by that clock it prescribes routine, as who should say, This shall be done at one, that shall be done at two, and at twelve such and such processes shall be inaugurated or completed. Love has no time, no clock, no sense of succession. The man who is in love with his work is surprised and annoyed to find that he must finish it. He accosts the time-teller with that vacant look of obstinate unwilling which signifies to the speaker that he has made a fool of himself; it is impossible, saith that look, that it can now be twelve o'clock by the sun, because I have hardly begun my work. It was twelve o'clock many hours ago according to the hireling: according to the lover, the devotee, the clock has hardly ticked—his soul is in his work.

This also is the meaning of the great outburst (viii. 1):—"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." "Condemnation" means judgment, criticism; the little court is shut up, and love is tried only in the court of heaven. No other court could hold it; before no other judgment seat could the arbitration of love be determined. We have in our own jurisprudence the first court, and the second court, and the court of Appeal, and the House of Lords. There are some cases that could not be tried before the magistrate; he can only hear an outline of the evidence, and say, there is a first-face view; this ought to go farther. He himself is not equal to the occasion, and he knows it, and therefore he sends the case on; and the second court cannot grapple with it, and it knows it, without confessing it, and has to get the case put a little higher, it is so complicated and entangled, and needs such a wonderful knowledge of precedents; and then the case is finally sent to the highest point recognised in the law of the constitution of the land, and there it is at least muddled into a momentary adjustment. But there is

the succession of courts; and the Apostle Paul says, It is just so with us; once we could be tried by the law, and the Judge would say, What saith the law? Now there is no condemnation, no initial magistrate, no little trumpery court by which the spiritual man can be judged; he can be judged only by his Saviour; the carnal cannot judge the spiritual, but he that is spiritual judgeth all things. He has the Divine insight, the eternal sagacity; he knows without learning. The books have not made him a scholar, but long intercourse with the Spirit of Wisdom.

The Apostle would have all believers to enter into this joy. He would have every man who loves Christ say to all earthly criticism, You do not know me; you do not understand me; you are too little, altogether too feeble, to comprehend the case; I am working from motives you never heard of. Therefore, when the Christian is to be judged he must be taken to the highest court of all. Are we, then, new in outward relations? The Apostle says, No:—"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Here is a new family. We are in the new family; we sustain all the larger relations of the new household. And being children, we are more. What more? Is there aught possible in addition to childship? Yes—"if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." That is how the process runs, from the lower to the higher, from the law to grace, from the letter to the spirit, from drudgery to sympathy. He who has touched the point of sympathy is in the family; he calls God, Father, with a familiarity that never descends to frivolity, with a reverence which is never debased by servility, with a love that scorns all language, and asks to express itself in the music of heaven.



## PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY God, we bless thee for all ministries that raise us from earth to heaven. Thou hast so made us as to desire the heavenly city. We hunger when we are away from home. There is no Father but in heaven. We have hewn out to ourselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. Once we were as sheep going astray; now we have returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. This we have done by thy grace; by grace are we saved; in grace we stand: the grace of the Lord is infinite. Help each of us to realise individual responsibility; may the cry of each heart be, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? May thy servants be industrious, faithful, waiting for the coming of the Lord with patience and constant hopefulness. Save us from trusting to each other that the work will be done; may every soul feel that the work is his, and that he must do it, and thus by great individuality of consecration may we constitute a great unity of effort. Thou dost save man one by one; thou dost take us to the unseen state one by one; thou wilt judge every man according to his own doings in the body, whether they be good or whether they be bad. Give us to feel that this is the law within which we stand, and may we answer it with all faithfulness and gratitude. We come ever in the name of Jesus, the name that fills heaven and earth with its music; we come ever by way of the Christ, higher than all the stars, deeper than all the graves of men; conquering all death, and filling the universe with life. We come to confess our sins, to mourn them with penitence and brokenheartedness, to look to the fountain opened in the house of David for sin and for uncleanness: Lamb of God, have mercy upon us; Jesu, Saviour of the world, help us and save us, we humbly beseech thee. Amen.

## Romans viii. 9.

"Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

## THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST.

IT must, then, be of infinite consequence to find out as nearly and completely as we may what that Spirit is. The sentence is marked by a striking tone of finality. It is a sentence complete in itself; it would seem to hold an entire Bible. It has upon the reader the effect of having seen the standard by which all life and thought must be judged—not a standard in the sense



of one of many, but the standard, the only standard; if a man fail there it is of no consequence where he may succeed. This should make us solemn. There need not be any self-discussion as to who are Christians and who are not. Every man can now determine for himself whether he is a Christian. The words are explicit; they are few in number; they go straight to the mark; they are none other than these—"If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." But many men have the name of Christ. Some men have gone so far as to call nations by the name Divine,—by what authority who can tell? But there have been men of imagination ardent and aggressive enough to call a nation Christian. It was a bold definition. The assumptions involved in that appellation are infinite. Is it possible to misuse, misapply, the name of Christ? Ought that name to be attached to anything that is not of the quality of the thing that is named? Ought the word Christ, or Christian, or any other of its forms to be lightly and almost indiscriminately applied? These are searching questions; they do not admit of off-hand treatment. Who is a Christian—or a Christ's—one? The answer is given:—"If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his"; therefore, if any man have the Spirit of Christ he is Christ's. Many men have an avowed preference for the doctrines of Christ; they are theoretically orthodox men; they hate persons who differ from them; if they do not go to the extremity of hatred, they linger around the intermediate point of prejudice with a strong inclination towards positive dislike: is that in the text? Not a word of it. There are men who would not for the universe multiplied by ten be Unitarians: but they can be many things which are peculiar, and not always wholesome, and sometimes they must hurt Jesus Christ, whom they have crowned in words and crucified in deeds, whom they worship in attitude and betray in action.

Let us go straight to the inquiry, What is the Spirit of Christ? Many mistakes have been made about the heart or spirit or disposition of the Son of God. We hear much that is merely sentimental. Men not only undeify but dehumanise the Son of God when they speak about him in a merely sentimental manner. We cannot make progress with the extension of the

kingdom of Christ unless we have a right conception of the King himself. Who would hesitate in describing the Spirit of Christ to speak of Jesus, Son of Mary, Son of Man, Son of God, as meek, and gentle, and amiable, and kind, and sympathetic, and tearful, and generous, and most forgiving? All that is right; but it assumes much. If we stop there we shall give a false representation of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. What word is more abused, in the sense of being less profoundly understood than the word *love*? To-day it is fashionable to preach the doctrine of Love. Only let men do what they like and wrap around themselves the cloak of God's love, and the preaching will be most acceptable and comforting. It may be true that love is the characteristic of the Spirit of Christ; certainly I shall not dispute it: but love means everything. The word shall not be changed, but its inclusions shall be more critically defined. Love is not a tear shed and dried and forgotten: love is not a sentiment that pays no regard to moral distinctions, and that says with immoral licence, It is of little consequence what you think or say or do, if at the last you crawl to heaven's door and make demands on heaven's love. That is not preaching; it is wicked eloquence.

~~Let us see what the Spirit of Christ was.~~ There are those who looking upon the earth see only its beauties. They speak of its flowers, and dew—morning and evening baptism of dew; they speak of dawn, and spring, and summer, and golden harvest; they set to music words that have no pith in them when detached from their origin and full issue of thought, which speaks of the goodness and the kindness of God in making "everything beautiful in his time." They are perfectly right within given limits, but because they do not include the whole case they are practically wrong; and when they come to apply this analogy to small things, they fail to do justice to the first elements of morality and righteousness. Let us see how the matter stands. The earth does grow flowers, but the earth could not grow a flower if the earth itself were not astronomically correct. The earth owes its beauties to its obedience. How tempting to find a flower and muse about it, and poetise about it, and to forget that that flower is the child of the Ten Commandments

that keep the earth in its order and appointed progress! The earth could grow nothing if the earth slipped the leash and undertook a species of gravitation on its own account. If the earth could remove itself one inch, its flowers would wither, its birds would die, its atmosphere would collapse; it would lose all its power of being and doing things that are beautiful and fruitful and good. Let us not fear to go back to origin, to the law point, to the solid reality,—to Genesis chap. i. ver. 1,—without which there can be no Bible. We begin so frequently at the wrong point, taking up a flower as if it were a thing in itself, caging a bird as if it were a solitary angel, which had first fallen into our keeping, and was to be looked upon as a specimen of an infinite number of other angels, not yet caught. How foolish we are! How in our definition of terms we miss the meaning. He misses the meaning of love who omits the element of righteousness.

What was the Spirit of Christ? Was it not marked by moral sublimity? Was there ever a head like Christ's? Was there ever a heart like Christ's? Jesus Christ did not need to read philosophy, because he was himself the wisdom of God. He needed not to invent a theory, to fit a certain flow and sequence of facts; for he was Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the line that belted with right of proprietorship all facts, all histories, all actions. How righteous he was! Many speak of Christ's love who never speak of Christ's righteousness: yet the righteousness of Christ was as much part of the Spirit of Christ as was the love which he bore in his heart and which he proved on the Cross. Said he, looking round upon the day in which he lived, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Who would have indicated that speech as one expressive peculiarly of love? It is more expressive of criticism, disappointment, moral indignation. Thus Christ alone could speak, because he held all things in the dominion of his own crown and sceptre. If he had not been right he could not have been critical; if he had not been right he might have been pedantic, censorious, inclined to throw discredit upon the repute of others, but he never could have been

judge. He loved because he was right; he grew flowers on the soil of his incarnation because he was leashed to the centres of eternity. To have come up from earth and spoken the language of heaven would have been to babble an unknown tongue; but to come down from heaven, to proceed from the Father, was to take up all things inferior and smaller, and use them with a master's handling. Recurring to the illustration of the earth, let us say the earth grows flowers because the earth has rocks, and the rocks of the earth are kept in their right places because of their relation to the sun: so in Christ's great speeches there are beauteous lilies, fair roses, wondrous beauties of colour and form and suggestion, but they are there because he himself is hidden in the bosom of the Father. How fearless Christ was! Never did man see the blush of fear on that marred cheek; never did the critic see the quivering of a coward's apprehension in those calm, all-seeing eyes. When Jesus went in to dine with the great men of his day he turned the table into a pulpit; he turned eating and drinking to sacramental uses; he transfigured the house into a temple of God. Men looked upon him frowningly, indignantly, suggestively, meaning what they would do under other circumstances; but still he proceeded, as a river might proceed through all kinds of landscape, now through wide-open fields, and now through forests and tangled places, and out again into fair blue light. He never ceased his moral discourse because fellow guests were wounded or annoyed, nor did he change his speech because his host looked on and wondered that he should eat bread at a man's table and wound the man himself. Christ never wounded but to heal. Jesus never threw a man into a humiliating position except he regarded it as an intermediate point that lay on the road to exaltation. Have we this spirit of fearlessness? "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." This age is not heroic. There is but little Christianity in this age because there is but little persecution. It takes a Smithfield to make heroes. It requires an Inquisition to develop manhood. The age is, from a Christian point of view, flaccid, gelatinous, unsteady, marked by a quivering incertitude of thought and action,—“If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” There is no open-air preaching to-day—by which I mean open-air profession, testimony and avowal;

no profession that is of the nature of challenge: there is profession without angles, without eccentricity, without peculiarity, —neat, proper, well-regulated, well-trimmed, privet-hedge-like profession: but bold, heroic, challenging, aggressive profession of Christianity, where is it?

Who can fail to find in the Spirit of Christ the great steady law of religious progressiveness? Never did Jesus Christ say, This is the end. To Jesus Christ an end was impossible, because he spoke of infinity and eternity—the ever-being, and the ever-pulsing, and ever-thinking. Christianity is very complete to-day. It can be published in a volume, and if any man dare to add one word to that volume; published and certified by proper authority, he will be regarded as a trespasser, a thief, and a robber, and a wolf in the flock. We are not thus following the Spirit of Christ. Said he, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." What did that "now" mean but that there was a time to come when all heaven would burn with a revealing glory? Did Jesus Christ accept the doctrine, the dogma, and thinking of his day as final? He set it aside, saying, "It hath been said by them of old time . . . but I say unto you—." He made history: every speech was an epoch; when he opened his mouth he advanced the progress of the world. We are called upon in our degree and way to do the same thing. We are never to change the quality; that is not in our power to do: but we have to develop what is in the root, we have to give that root fair opportunities of self-evolution: if we put it in the wrong place, treat it with the wrong ministries, deny to it its proper light and rain, then what can it be in the end but a disappointment? Said Christ, "When he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." Has that Spirit come? That is the vital inquiry. We believe that we are living in the dispensation of the Spirit, under the ministry, direct and vital, of the Holy Ghost; we have therefore a belief in modern and continual inspiration, a ruling in the heart conducted by the Holy Spirit, and a ruling in the whole Church also conducted by the same Divine agency. We do not discover anything that contradicts the Bible, but we discover much that enlarges its applications, clears up its mysteries, and bring its



into positive helpful relation to all the development of human life. No man is called upon to write another Bible, but every Christian is called upon to see a Bible within the Bible, more and more of revelation in the very Book, which is supposed to be final,—to see within the letter an infinite, ever-gracious, ever-luminous spirit.

How practically beneficent was the Spirit of Christ! "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Christ went about doing good. Whenever he rose in the morning it was to do good, or he would not have awaked again. To have awakened out of sleep for the purpose of doing nothing would have been impossible to the Son of God; he would have slept upwards, he would have dreamed himself back into heaven. Jesus Christ said when men were hungry, "Give ye them to eat." Lord, how can we give them to eat?—What have you got in your hand?—So little. It will do to begin with—give ye them to eat. No man ever gives at Christ's command and in Christ's cause without getting more than he gives. So truly is this the case that it is almost perilous to give anything at Christ's bidding lest we should fall into the temptation of giving it that we may increase our own resources. Herein is a very subtle temptation. Sometimes it has been almost impossible to give bread to the hungry because we knew that God was standing behind us, and no sooner would we part with one loaf than he would give us ten; he was waiting there to see what we would do. The temptation is that we may do it that we may get the ten, and if such be our motive God will disappoint us and bring us to great humiliation. Said Christ, through Paul, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him." Yet we say the day of miracles is past! No miracle ever done by Christ can touch the glory of feeding an enemy, forgiving a foe, withholding the hand that would return an insult. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." When he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; he gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. He said, Forgive, and be like your Father. How often, Lord? "Seventy times seven";



in other words, for ever. Who can do this? We can forgive, Lord, but we cannot forget. Then, said he, you cannot forgive. Who, then, can be Christ's? Who, then, will take the census of the Christian population? A man may be a theologian, and not a Christian. A man may be a minister, and not a Christian. A man may be socially reputable, and not a Christian. A man may be a Pharisee, fasting by rule and paying his debts punctually, and yet know nothing about Christianity. On the other hand, I will lay down this bold doctrine; a man may be full of faults and yet he may be a Christian. We may distinguish justly between one fault and another. We have insisted always, with a consistency that acquires the force of an argument, that everything depends upon the spirit and purpose of the heart. Here, for example is a poor drunkard: can anything be worse! Yes; the drunkard may be the very best of sinners, the very prince of those who do wrong. What is worse than a drunkard? A liar. There is no cure for lying, except a miracle wrought by God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. A man may be caught by the demon of drink, and yet he may come out of the assault with tears and heartbreakings, and with a sense of shame that amounts to penitence. But a liar may be sober; a liar may expel a drunkard from the club, and think he is doing good. A liar may be in the church. A liar is the basest of characters. There is no depth so deep as the baseness of a false nature. A man, on the other hand, may be very passionate, he may often go wrong in this direction: what is worse? A thief. A thief is a liar *plus*. Think of it—a thief! a man who watches you, then takes what belongs to you, and then hails you with Good-day! Can that man be converted? I feel that he ought not: but if I touch the Cross of Christ I feel that perhaps he may. But human feeling says, Let him be damned; if there is a hot hell in God's universe let him go in; there is no rag of honour on the base soul; there is no touch of heroism in the vile nature. So would we say outside the Cross, and only the Cross can make us at least hold our tongues. So perverse is human nature that some Christians of loud profession do not hesitate to say that they are very proud. Then they are not Christians. There is more said against pride in the Bible than is said against drunkenness, yet there are men who

are proud to call themselves proud,—nay, they bridle up and say, You must remember that I am very proud. Then if you are, you are a child of the devil, whoever you are. Now take the statistics of the Christian Church! Yet again so perverse is human nature that men may say, We have heard that the drunkard is better than the liar, and that the passionate man is better than the thief, and that the unchaste man is better probably than the proud man; therefore we will go over to that side. No! God forbid! If alleviations have been sought for, they have not been produced that they might be turned into authority for licence; they have been used as a kind of encouragement to men to whom they refer to come away and come home, and for no other purpose. He who would put them to another purpose is himself a liar and a thief. “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” Never forget that there is an evangelical spirit as well as an evangelical doctrine. I know of no irony so complete, so bitter, so deadly, as the irony of preaching an evangelical doctrine in an anti-evangelical spirit. The evangelical spirit is full of yearning, solicitude, concern; it is doctrine; it is a spirit of tears; it is a spirit that will not give a man up until he forces himself out of the circle of intercession and the sphere of love.

Who, then, can be saved? God knows. We do not. But there is less Christianity in the world than we might at first suppose. On the other hand, there is more Christianity than is sometimes reckoned. Who are the Christians? The men who want to be Christians. Now the number enlarges. The men who say amid faults and slips—lapses of every kind, drunkenness, and passion, and waywardness—My God, I hate myself: I wish to be like Jesus, but this devil is too strong for me; he never sleeps; if I could catch him asleep one hour I would pray in it; I want to be like Jesus! If we can say that with our hearts, and live accordingly, though we may be cast down, thrown about, much injured, if that be the supreme purpose, the continual tendency of our life, no man shall pluck us out of our Father’s hand.

Romans viii. 34.

"Yea rather, that is risen again.\*"

THE UPPER THOUGHT.

ALWAYS wait for the second and better thought. Never interrupt any speaker, especially a speaker of established reputation, but let him quietly and perfectly finish what he has to say ; then you can make your remarks. "It is Christ that died." Why are we always dwelling on the death ? Is that all that happens ? The Apostle brightens, his voice rises, his figure enlarges as if in spiritual dignity, as he exclaims, Died ? nay, that were the first thought, the initial stage ; the real thing is that he has risen again : the rising is the upper thought, the death is the lower. You will find this to be the case all through and through the divinest life. We are never allowed to stop more than a comma at the word "death." The universe was not made to die : there is no death in the purpose of God : he made man immortal. What difficulty can any one have in declaring the immortality of the soul ? No other idea ever entered into the purpose of God. It it be possible for man to commit spiritual suicide, that is another matter ; but judged, from the Divine standpoint, when God made man in his own image and likeness he did not make him the creature of a day, but a heir of the ages numberless, a citizen of the city of light. The word "die" must come in, the garden must permit a grave to be dug in its heart, but it can grow flowers all over it. "It is Christ that died, yea rather,"—it is a rising cadence, an inflection upwards—"that is risen again." That is the Christian creed ; that is Christian music ; that is the very gospel of the heart of God.

We have amongst us teachers of the finest spiritual quality, who are addressing us in some such words as these :—Why do

you always dwell upon the death of Christ? In your sacrament you always set forth the Lord's death: why do you not forget the idea of death, and pass to the upper thought, and dwell in holy rapture, in sacred, grateful triumph, upon the resurrection of the Lord? The appeal is beautiful, tender, but incomplete. The resurrection implies death: the pinnacle implies the foundation; the pinnacle is only the foundation gone up higher. When we celebrate resurrection we cannot forget death; without the death there could have been no resurrection; without the Cross there could have been no crown; so that we are really dwelling upon the resurrection whilst we are dwelling upon the death, seeing that the death is not the death of a man, but the death of one who made himself equal with God. When such a Man dies he rises again. Christian thought therefore is not single but composite. When the Christian says "Christ died," he says in effect, "yea rather, that is risen again." Besides, when we take the Lord's Supper we do not memorialise the Lord's death; you have omitted part of the statement which you began to quote: we show forth the Lord's death "till he come." Do not omit the three closing words; they make the death beautiful: they abolish death.

This would appear to be so simple that everybody would at once acknowledge it. Its simplicity has often been mistaken, and because of the simplicity men have allowed themselves to fall into obvious and superficial error. This is the key to much beside itself. A right realisation of the second or upper thought makes the kingdom of heaven a new empire to the most enraptured soul. There are minds that instantly fasten upon effects; such minds are apt to lose all the teaching of causes. There are minds marked by great rapidity of action. Their characteristic is impatience; hence they have no pity upon the preacher who waits for the slow and the timid, saying to the prancing horses, Wait, here is a sick man, and we must not leave him behind. That is the great preacher. He will not allow a little child to be dropped out on the road. He is not one of those charioteers who drive on, fall out who or what may. He says, I am bound to take you all with me: wait, here is a lame man, and we must tarry for his salvation. What a

pity it is congregations will not allow the preacher to conduct the service! How much they lose when they criticise his method of doing things,—not knowing that his, if he be a true man born to do the work, is the great pastoral heart, the great shepherdly solicitude; not one of your impatient men that always want to be foaming at the mouth, but one of your great men-women, father-mothers, that say, Wait until we have taken up the very least and the very lamest of the flock. If we carry out this idea we shall get a new standing-point and recover much of our own comfort and somewhat of our most venerable and trustworthy orthodoxy. Let us see.

The preaching of to-day very largely consists in declaring that love is the crowning grace. There are those who, in proclaiming that sweet doctrine, become almost impatient, indeed, almost contemptuous, when they speak about faith and even hope. Their cry is: Love abideth for ever; love is the consummation; he who has love has God, for God is love. Is this untrue? It is not untrue, but it is incomplete. You cannot have the resurrection without the death, and you cannot have love without faith. Love is not gush, unregulated emotion, a mere foam of the soul, white for a moment and then blackened in extinction. Love, if it is to abide for ever, must have faith for one wing and hope for the other. We are constantly reading the doctrine that not creeds, not theologies, not catechisms, but love is the great thing. So it is. Why are you so contemptuous about faith and theology, and reasoned statement regarding the kingdom of God? We say, the roof is the thing. So it is: but what does it rest upon? Persons who thus announce the supremacy of love may sometimes be led into the fallacy that love is all. It is easier to put the roof on after the walls are up, than it would be to put it on before the walls are built. That latter attempt might be unsuccessful. There may be clever men who can fix roofs upon nothing, but I have never employed them; I have no intention of inquiring concerning their method of working. So that when creatures declare that love is the thing, not creed, or theology, or metaphysics, or eloquence, or prophecy, I answer in one sentence, You are perfectly right; the Apostle himself says the same thing in more ardent and eloquent

language, but he also by his whole process and course of teaching shows that love is the blossom and faith is the root. What would you say concerning a man who, delicately and gratefully touching a flower, should say, This is the thing : we do not want your root and your stem. Very well ; take up the root, burn the stem : now where is your flower ?

Or the point of view is changed sometimes, and we have what are called practical preachers, and their sermon is this :—Conduct is the thing we want : everything stands or falls by behaviour : what is a man's life ? Is there anything wrong in such inquiry ? By no means, but there is a good deal omitted from it. When we come to understand things more clearly and largely we shall see that conduct is translated belief. If conduct is a game at chance, who will praise the man who has mechanically clean hands and a good external reputation ? It only so happened : there is no philosophy in it, no eternity in it : but when a man is good because his heart has been touched by Divine influences, and brought into harmony with Divine purposes ; when a man's conduct is good because he has been with Jesus and learned of him, has entered into the spirit of his priesthood and accepted the purchase of his sacrifice, then his conduct is no longer his own, it is a creation and a miracle of the grace of God. We are therefore perfectly agreed with the people who say that love is the crowning grace, and that conduct is the principal thing ; but we cannot allow them to substitute effects for causes, or in praising the consequences to forget the processes. Still it is Christ that died. Christ's was a resurrection ; it was not a descent from heaven, it was an ascent from the earth.

It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again. There are those who are strongly opposed to our dwelling upon the death of Christ. They admonish us to dwell upon the living ministry of the everlasting Priest. They say, He is no longer in the grave : why do you speak about him as a buried Saviour ? You should forget the burial and dwell upon the resurrection ; Christ is now on the right hand of God pleading for us, amplifying and purifying our prayers, and making them prevalent in the heavenly sanctuary ; why not, therefore, forget the dreary, ghastly past,



and dwell upon the bright and beauteous present? Why this fear of the death? The resurrection did not save us; the resurrection is the corner stone of the Church, but that which creates the Church, makes it possible in human development, is the Cross of Christ, the Blood of Christ. I am not yet sufficiently advanced, or sufficiently in the rear, to be ashamed of saying that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. Earnest men ought to be careful how they suspect one another or denounce one another; they should be eager for each other's welfare: for myself, therefore, I can only say that, if you take out of my gospel the death of Christ, you at the same time take out the resurrection. The one is dependent upon the other. Without the death, resurrection was impossible; resurrection without the death is a worship of the end, by simply ignoring or undervaluing the means.

Then there are others who say, Not the book, but the spirit that is in the book, the living Spirit. We do not care for the Bible as a mere book, they say; we want to be under the influence of the inspirer of the Book. Are they wrong? No; yet their statement is incomplete and is open to serious perversion. They may not mean all that their words imply to other minds, but we are bound to look, not at what we ourselves mean, but at what the words may be taken to mean by sincere and earnest but uninstructed minds. We cannot always go with our own words to explain them; so before sending them forth we should take as much care as possible that they include all the elements of a complete and useful statement. We cannot yet do without the Book. I never inquire how much of the Bible I can do without: my constant inquiry is, How much of it do I know? To what extent am I familiar with this sacred oracle? Have I got into the genius of any one book in the holy volume? Do I know the complete purpose of any writer whose works are found in the sacred canon? Have I been a perfunctory reader of the sacred canon, reading a little here and a little there? or have I mastered the Book, at least in its structure and general outline? Far be it from any one of us to denounce the doctrine that what we want is the Holy Spirit who inspired the Book: but if he inspired the Book, the Book must be of kindred

quality with his own. Did he inspire the Book? We believe he did, and therefore in reading the Book we are reading himself. He who holds communion with the Book holds communion with the Spirit. My fear is that by building upon points we shall never build any large and solid structure of thought: we must not therefore be exalting love, or conduct, or the resurrection, or the Spirit, without recognising the under-truths, the basal, historical, sequential realities, on which all these glorious consummations rest their whole weight. I can imagine it very easy for young people especially to be charmed with the doctrine that love is the great crown of Christian life; I can understand how famous poets or novelists ignoring all Puritanic detail should speak to the young and the sentimental about love, and how the young and the sentimental should say, This is what we like: there is no hell here; nothing about the devil, nothing about punishment, but love, love, love—all love! That gospel will never save you. You must work your way through all the process to the result, and having done so you will not undervalue or deprecate the process, but thank God for it, because it was full of the elements of education and of discipline, of chastening and of refinement.

Understand me therefore. In all these contentions there is an element of truth. When a man praises love he is right, when he praises conduct he is right, when he praises the Spirit of God he is right; but it is possible for him to praise all these and to do so at the expense of ignoring what they themselves imply—vitally, inevitably, and eternally imply. What would you think of a man standing on the top of a hill and saying to climbers below, What are you doing down there? The top is the thing! Here am I, look at me: what are you doing down there? You would say, The man forgets that he was once down here himself. Exactly, there you have the whole thing. We do not fly to the top, we travel to it step by step, oh, so slowly, so wearily! but if the face be set towards the top God will see that we fail not of the beautiful summit. What would you think of a man going into a school and saying to the scholars who were reading alphabets and declining nouns and conjugating verbs and so on, Boys, what is all this about? what you want is not

gerund-grinding, but you want wisdom; wisdom is the thing; all these grindings and preparations and processes are nothing, the wisdom that comes of learning is the principal thing. The man is right, but he never got his own wisdom, if it be a wisdom of letters, without going through that very same dreary process. What would you think of a man who was very skilled in any art, in any craft, saying to the apprentice, You need not be doing what you are now doing; what you have to do is what I am doing; look here, a stroke and the thing is done; one movement, and beauty testifies to the skill of my action. That is all right, but practice makes perfect, according to the old saying, and an apprentice is after all not a journeyman, a beginner is not one that is at the point of finishing. We have to go through certain processes. We are told that practice makes the musician, practice makes the sculptor. I say, No, it does not. All the practice in the world would never make some of us sculptors; we should waste all the marble in all the quarries in creation and never get a face out of it. No: practice makes the musician if the musician is in the man; practice will waken the musician, call him and say, Arise! the morning is nigh; awake! the harp awaketh thee; stir thyself, for thy destiny is at hand. There practice can do wonders. A man is either a musician, from all eternity or he is not; he is either a preacher from all eternity or he is not. You cannot make a preacher. You can make a man who will read to you a very neat and almost decent little paper, but you cannot make a preacher. There is something before all this practice, and that is gift, destiny.

It is equally so with all these preachers of the upper truth. They are right, but they are incomplete. I say therefore, begin where you can: recognise the fact that men are at different points in the line of progress. This is the difficulty the preacher has for ever to contend with. He is speaking to a thousand people, two hundred of whom are at the very highest point, two hundred of whom are at the middle, and the rest are at the starting point, and they cannot get into the work; they say, Oh, how hard, how impossible! Who is sufficient for these things? And the preacher has to speak to the very highest,

and those in the middle, and those at the end; and he has to speak in his own tongue, now eloquent, now encouraging; at the first solicitous, patient, long-suffering, speaking a word of godly cheer to souls that are just going to give up. Recognise the fact, therefore, that some men are in advance, some are in the midst, some are at the beginning, and if they are all in one direction they all belong to Christ. Let not the one who is on the top of the mountain discourage the climbers who are patiently toiling up. Do speak kindly to us. We would like to be as high up as you are, and we mean to be some day, but give us time. Once you were here; why, here is your very footprint—see, there is no mistake about it. Give us, therefore, the word from above. Watchman, what of the upper places? Are they very bright? How is the air in that lofty region? Is it an air of immortality? Oh, send down to me, poor struggler on the mountain-side, some kind word, some cheering message! and by-and-by, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we will clasp hands at the top, and say, It is we who began at the foot of the mountain; we are the climbers; yea rather, it is we who stand on the mountain-top—it is we who have thus become familiar with heaven.

## Romans x.

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved,"—(ver. 1).

### PAUL ON THE HEART.

PAUL could never get away from this word "saved." How much meaning he put into it as he wrote it or uttered it, we can never know. It was a great word to Paul. There are those who tell us to-day that the Church must not regard itself as a great soul-saving organisation. The statement can only be excused on the ground of its unconscious folly; or it can only be defended by assigning to the term "soul-saving" a narrow, and therefore an unapostolic and unscriptural, sense. What is soul-saving? It is not some new feat in sentimentalism, some more or less successful trick in mental metamorphosis: soul-saving is soul-creating, man-creating, man-restoring, man re-qualified for all the responsibilities of duty, for all the enjoyments of service, and for all the solemnities of the unknown destiny of the race. If you understand anything less or else by soul-saving, you are at liberty to pour your contempt on the efforts of the Church to save souls. But no man's soul can be saved without his eyes being opened and his ears, and all his faculties being quickened into new sensitiveness, into larger receptiveness, into keener association and profounder fellowship with God. When, therefore, you hear men who never knew the mystery of the soul's salvation, condemning those who seek the salvation of the soul, excuse them, if you can, on the ground that they are unconsciously and unintentionally foolish and almost profane. Paul would have men saved. He could do nothing with them until they were saved; they were plunging about in the sea until he got them saved; all their minds were in confusion and cloud and pitiful distraction until their souls were saved. He never left them without giving instructions of a disciplinary,

military, and beneficent kind ; he did not allow a man to say his soul was saved, and then to retire into elegant leisure, that he might nurse the soul that he supposed to be saved : instantly Paul set him to work, consumed him with the fire of sacrifice, and made him live through many a death. There is a soul-saving that is not worth thinking about. That is not the soul-saving of Christ, of Paul, of the Cross, of eternity.

In the opening of this chapter see how often the Apostle uses the word "heart": "Brethren, my heart's desire. . . . Say not in thine heart. . . . The word is in thy heart. . . . shalt believe in thine heart. . . . For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness. . . ." When Paul gets hold of a word that has God's wine in it, he holds the goblet up until he has run every drop of that blessed wine into the souls of men. It is not tautology in the case of Paul. He is guilty of tautology who has nothing to say. He who has much to say will often say it over and over again, and even the change of words will never impair the substance and identity of the thought. Paul is now engaged with the heart of man—that is, with the heart in various aspects and uses, and it may be profitable to follow him in his sacred and animating thought.

"My heart's desire is that Israel might be saved." Is this an earnest heart? It is an earnest heart indisputably; but is there any other word that could be put here, that would express a further and a more delicate shade of meaning? What did the angels sing at the first Christmastide? "Good-will toward men." Paul's expression might be so rendered—Brethren, the good-will of my heart is that Israel might be saved. We must not obliterate this word "good-will." It is a domestic word, it is a sweet, simple, healthy word; we could say in strict conformity with the etymology of the text, "My longing is that Israel might be saved—my wish above all other wishes is that Israel might be saved." This might all be etymologically correct. Yet there is a sweetness about "the good-will of my heart"—there is a womanliness about that description that suits the strong man well. Sometimes we think Paul's great strength will run away with him, and when he is in the very fury of his power some element of womanliness falls upon his passion and softens it into



domestic music. Every Christian should be the trustee of good-will for the whole world. If there is any Christian whose good-will is limited to his own family, or to his own country, he is no Christian at all. Good-will is not a geographical term: it would be at home amid the throngs of the planets: wherever there is weakness or want, that word would take a supreme place in the language of desolation and necessity. Good-will is no stay-at-home; good-will is not a local parishioner; good-will is not a mere seat-holder, regular in attendance and uncertain in payment; good-will belongs to every wind, to every zone, to every sea; good-will tarries all night that it may help some wayfarer who has lost his path; good-will says to the blind man, Take hold of my hand, and I will guide you across this busy thoroughfare; good-will stoops down to the little child and carries the kiss the child has not strength to raise itself and get. Good-will was part of the angels' song when the radiant host came down from the land of the morning to tell the children of men that the day was breaking upon the horizon of time. Let the Church be a brotherhood founded upon good-will, animated by good-will, ignorant of malice, clamour, censoriousness, and all manner of bitterness, and the Church will make itself felt yet.

Was Paul unjust to anybody? Impossible. Where there is good-will there can be no injustice. What then does he say? "I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." They are all missionaries. It is a mistake to suppose that missionaries are Christian instruments or agents only. The Jew was a missionary; he compassed sea and land that he might make the Gentiles proselytes. The Jew had something in him that he did not understand; something that had to be purified and ennobled, and bloom out into the beauty of Christian philanthropy. "They have a zeal of God": they burn for God. They know the letter of the law. Josephus says the Jew knew the law better than he knew his own name. That is zeal. The Jew overflowed Asia Minor and Syria, and, to the great disgust of Latin historians, forced his way into Italy, and would not keep out of Rome, that he might convert the Gentiles and proselyte the Pagans. That is a zeal of God. There is nothing in zeal itself, any more than there is anything

in sincerity. We are told that if a man be sincere that is enough. We deny it. We inquire, What is the man sincere about? What is the object or the motive of his sincerity? Saul was sincere when he took letters with him to Damascus, but his sincerity went for nothing when he was scorched by the white flame, and led into the city like a wounded baby—he, the murderer, led blindly into the city he meant to devastate. It is not enough for you to be zealots, to have your Bethels, and Salems, and conventicles, and cathedrals, and temples, and ministers; it is not enough for you to shut yourselves up within your own four walls, and say, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we! That is zeal; it is to be counted: but it is not “according to knowledge.” The Jews knew the law and yet knew nothing about it. You cannot know any law by simply knowing the word of the law; law, if real law, anywhere, in county courts, or House of Lords, is equity turned to practical uses. Equity is an abstract term, it is a metaphysical symbol. Equity may be codified into law, but itself stretches back to eternity, and covers the very being of God. So the Bible is not so much stationery “authorised to be read in churches”; it is a word, a logos, a spirit, a genius, an impalpable flame, an eternity. The Jews knew the law, remembered the law, quoted the law, fought for the law, counted all things but loss that they might excel one another in the knowledge of the law; and yet they knew nothing about it. It is possible to read the Bible without reading it. The Bible is in the Bible. If we could make this truth, so succinctly stated, *felt*, we should have new heavens and a new earth in the Church; a great Church would be created by that very doctrine, and man would touch man with a brother’s sympathy, and not with a critic’s suspicion. What part of the law do you know? What part of revelation fascinates you most? Make it your own, and never consider that the part is equal to the whole; remember that no one man is all men, no one Church is all the Church: we are all required—simplest, poorest blunderer in the A B C class, and the oldest angel that wrinkles the forehead of his wisdom whilst he bends over the ineffable mysteries—to make up the household of love. Fewer zealots, more Christians, must be the motto of progress.

In the sixth verse Paul seems to turn away from the earnest longing and good-will of his own heart to describe the possibility of a speculative heart. His words are:—

“Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? . . . Or, Who shall descend into the deep?”

The word admits of various explications. Take it that this is the reasoning of mere speculativeness. The Church is degraded and depleted of highest unction and power by cleverness. The moment you find a clever Christian, avoid him! Piety is never clever; piety is simple, restful, trustful, beneficent, self-forgetting, sin-forgiving, and if it says anything brilliant, nobody is so surprised as piety itself. Yet it is always speaking brilliantly; it is clothed with the very glory of God. Yet there is a delight in speculativeness which puts its angry questions or its urgent inquiries in a very acerb and penetrating tone sometimes, as “Who shall ascend into heaven? . . . Who shall descend into the deep? How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?” The Apostle does not rebuke mental elevation or intellectual passion; he subdues all that is merely intellectual into the chastened spirit of simple, loving, ardent piety. There are those who would come to church, they say (much emphasis on “they say”), if their questions could be answered. What are their questions? they are all nonsensical. What are their inquiries? they are all significant of intellectual vanity. What are these interrogations that stand like so many constables at the church door keeping away the superb ignorance of the world? There are questions that need not be answered here and now. There are great questions to be answered, practical inquiries to be settled, and to all these interrogatories the court of heaven has made answer in language which mother and child can understand. I would adjure young minds to beware of speculativeness. We must all pass through the vestibule of folly into the school of wisdom. There are periods of life when men must not be spoken to, because they are too young to understand the music of experience. “Every man must break his own head”; every man must pluck the forbidden fruit and eat and be damned a day: there is over all and through all a purpose that will turn apostasies into the beginnings of immortality and

heaven. Every child must put its questions. The questions may be very entangled and curious, and they may be accepted as signs of perfectly marvellous genius. I have sometimes taken a book, and have written in it the questions of young genius, and years after I have said to these young interrogators, Once you asked these questions. What has the reply been? a significant smile. So it must ever be. There are some things we would be glad not to be reminded of; and yet sometimes to be reminded of them is part of a liberal education.

The Apostle passes on, but still keeps his hold upon the same theme, to say "The word is in thine heart." That is, a trusted heart, a heart that is made the depository of Divine revelation. How does the word get into the heart? Various. Who has the key of the heart? God. There is a word of God in every heart; in some cases a long way down, and so blurred as hardly to have shape or accent. God hath not left himself without witness; everywhere there is some glint of conscience, some sting of self-reproach, or some wonder about the mystery of things, that may at any moment brighten into a realised revelation. A scribe was listening in the congregation and wondering at the fair beauteous young Man whose face was old with eternity, and yet whose voice was young with the morning's music; and when he heard that he answered them wisely, he said, "Well, Master, thou hast said the truth." That is the testimony that Christ elicits—testimony from observers, listeners, careful judges of his teaching. They listen to him and say, Yes! A thousand questions may be in charge of the angel or genius Speculation, but all the questions that the heart needs now to have answered Christ has abundantly satisfied. Be just to your best heart. Measure yourself when you are at your best. You are twenty men, and you should fix upon the real man and say, That is myself. Sometimes, even in the most iron eyes, there are indications of tears: seize that moment of sensibility, and say to your soul, Then thou art not yet dead. Sometimes an old strain of religious music will bring back all your yesterdays, and remind you of the time when you were fellow-worshippers with your father and mother, and there will be just a twinge of the heart, a sudden electric thrill: seize yourself at that moment, and

say, I may yet live. There are devils enough to tell you to take the worst view of yourselves; when you are down in despair and self-disgust, they say, "That is you: what is the good of your praying, or singing, or thinking, or church going? you are almost in hell, why not go in? "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." God is born in every heart. Then he sometimes goes from the outside so to say to the inside, from the written to the receiving man, and in this sense the word of God is in thine heart. The Apostle advances and charges us to believe in this word.

"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness."—(ver. 10.)

There is a great deal of confusion about the etymology of this word "heart." There are those who mark us out into mind, body, soul, heart, spirit. That analysis has its uses. The word heart is often used in the Scripture as being significant of the whole soul. Sometimes the word heart means the understanding, the intellect, the entire man, and it may do so here. "For with the heart, with the whole soul, man believeth unto righteousness." I have no objection to that construction of the grammar; at the same time there is a consciousness which precedes all grammar and will survive it. Sometimes we believe with our whole consent in a *nem. con.* sense; there is no hostile voting: the resolution is carried *nemine contradicente*. That is not enough, we want it cordially, heartily, rapturously, passionately carried; then it will not be a dead letter on the minute book of our recollection, it will be the genius, the motive, and the ardent, persistent policy of a consecrated life. In that sense, I, begging pardon of etymology, put in a word for heart, as signifying that fine accent which lights up with fire every word of reason, and solemn dictate of judgment. We are in reality what we are in our hearts.

"You may lay it down as an eternal truth," Archdeacon Farrar recently said in a sermon in St. Margaret's, "that what the Divine Majesty requires is innocence alone. You will be saved neither by opinions nor by observances, but solely by your character and life. A man is not holy merely because he observes the Rubric. He must do right." The Lord bless preachers who speak this bold morality! To hear such a voice



under such a roof is to hear music under most favourable circumstances. The criticism I shall pass upon this is a criticism which the Archdeacon himself would instantly accept. Instead of saying man must "do" right I should simply say man must "be" right. The two words ought to be interchangeable and synonymous, but they are not always so in practice. A man may do right by reading the law, and yet he may miss the Christ of the law; a man may do right in going to church, and yet he may not be in church at all in any sense that really implies spiritual fellowship; his mind may be away flying on the uncertain winds, and his imagination may be distracted by the clamour of a thousand mountebanks: but when a man is—you cannot get away from that verb *To Be*; that is the great mother verb of all the tongues—when a man is right, everything he does is right—the motive is right, the nature is right; you have not only good work, but a good worker. "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." We cannot get the start of Christ, we cannot get to some deeper metaphysic; when we think we have discovered something original we find it marked by his blessed fingers; he has taken it up into his arms and blessed it, and only left it there to be discovered by us. He is from eternity. If we would be right, we must be in Christ; if we would be in Christ, we must go to him by way of the Cross. We cannot be left out of this. Sometimes riotous men, who have money in all their pockets, and who have only to touch the bell to call a roomful of servants, say, Ha, ha, we do not want this tragic Gospel. Nor do they; the ox in the field does not need it, the fatness of prosperity may exclude the Cross: but there comes a time when man can no longer enjoy his own luxuries, when appetite is sated by the fulness of its own delicacies, then the heart cries out, Am I an orphan? do I belong to any household? What am I? whither go I? Oh, this mystery of dying!—"the world recedes, it disappears": is there no one to touch my hand without hurting it? is there no one to touch my hand so that my hand shall touch his heart, and my heart again shall touch some kindred heart? Ah me! then ask the mockers who laughed at Christ what answer they have to the swellings of Jordan. The beauty, the blessedness, the grandeur of this Cross is, that it is most to us when we need it most.



Romans xii.

THE CHRISTIAN IDEAL.

A NEW section of the Epistle would seem to open with the twelfth chapter. The eleventh chapter concludes with "Amen": but Amen was not necessarily a final word with the Apostle Paul. He had his own way of writing. He began again after he was supposed to have finished; always another idea occurred to him; evermore there was a light beyond on which he must dwell if only for a moment, and scarcely had he indicated that beam than there dawned upon that ardent mind mornings brighter than he had ever seen. We shall know from the application the meaning of the sermon. In very deed there are parts of the sermon we cannot understand. The Epistle to the Romans is intensely theological, doctrinal, here and there bewildering, metaphysical. We do not know what the Apostle means; probably he hardly knew his own meaning; that is to say, he saw things which he could only shadowingly indicate and not substantially develop and represent. It was a wonderful mind. To be near the Apostle Paul was to be at school; to read one of his epistles is to see that we have not yet begun our education. Yet who could be so simple, so practical? Who could be so definite in exhortation? We shall know from the twelfth chapter onward all that he has been talking about; that is to say, we shall know in practical exhortation what we never for a moment could understand in metaphysical disquisition. It is even so with men in the Church and men everywhere. There can be but few metaphysicians. All men must be workers, must attend to the practical side of life, must accept discipline, and must work out some policy or theory of being. If we could establish ourselves in this conviction, infinite trouble

would be saved and infinite mischief would be prevented. The danger is that all men think themselves metaphysicians. As a matter of fact, there is only a man here and there who ought to meddle with the philosophy of things; the millions should live on the outside: work, attend to practical duties, and accept the conclusions wrought out for them either by philosophy on the one hand or experience on the other. Those who cannot understand the first eleven chapters of the Epistle to the Romans should begin at the twelfth chapter.

"I beseech you therefore." The term "therefore" may be a term in ratiocination, and probably was in this instance; or it may be an ebullient word, his feeling is so excited as to become itself a form of reasoning, and he will have all men do something because God's way is so mysterious, yet withal so beneficent. ". . . by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies." This is a reference to the general constitution of human nature; it is not a word which could be replaced by the other and vaguer word "yourselves": when the Apostle says bodies in this connection he means bodies—flesh, the outward, lower, meaner self; so that not only the tenant should be a hero, but his house should be a sanctuary. Lay the emphasis upon the word "bodies": the flesh must be broken down, subdued, overruled, refined, glorified. Nor is this to be done by mutilation, or by the barbarous custom of ancient times of putting the knife to the jugular vein and causing the body to die. This is to be a living sacrifice: every member complete, yet each member doing its work simply, lovingly, obediently; the whole body alive, but controlled, disciplined, and turned to highest and sweetest utility. This is the difference between the old sacrifices and the sacrifice required under the Gospel. It is easy to kill a bullock, easy to offer a thousand rams: but we are called to the spiritual sacrifice of being dead yet living, of passing through our own death into newness of creatureship, the upper mystery and the broader mystery of spiritual resurrection. Hence, the folly of monasticism, and mutilation, laceration, and those starvings and contempts with which the body is visited by merely mechanical disciplinarians. We are not to shut the ear lest we should hear music. We are to open the ear and say, Let

me hear you : I can judge you now. Are your tones pure ? Is your meaning sacred ? Play on, sing on, I can discriminate ; I will reject the suggestion of evil, I will respond to the tone of purity. We are not to hide ourselves away from the recreations and the amusements and the entertainments of life : but we are to say, What are you ? what can you do ? what is your power ? what scope have you ? We are now above you : once we were on a level with you and we were dragged as by cart ropes and waggon chains behind you ; but now we can take you up and set you down, use you, make a convenience of you, and it is impossible for you to so besiege us by vicious importunity as to make any conquest over us. We are living sacrifices ; not dead bodies, but living bodies ; every drop of blood intact, every drop of blood a drop of fire ; and yet we pray. To this vocation we are called. We are not amputated, depleted, or disabled men ; but we are full, complete, crowned men, and have that highest of all sovereignty, the sovereignty of ourselves. Thus Paul's theology is practical conduct. Apostolic metaphysics must end in human good behaviour. Theology is not a quibble in words, a trick in logomachy ; it is an attainment in character. Theologians that never come out of the theological cloud ought never to have got into it ; they misrepresent the kingdom of God,—they are word-choppers, and murderers of human thought and language, and spoiling wolves that are seeking to live upon the flock of Christ. Any sermon that does not come out in a grand application ought never to have been delivered. The sacrifice is to be "holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service"—which is the service of your reason. The Apostle will not have reason driven out of the Church. The Pauline Church is a church of rationalists in the highest, truest sense of that term—in fact in the only high and true sense. Rationalism that does not include God is reason without head, or hands, or faculty that can be turned to use : a blind teacher prating of colour which it has never seen. The Apostle will have our reason sanctified. Reason should be a worshipper ; reason should take the covering from its lofty head and bow before the Cross in reverent obeisance. That is Paul's idea, and Paul is the teacher of Christians, whatever else he may or may not be.

Does the apostolic exhortation end with the body? The answer is found in the next verse:—"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." In the first verse the body is put into its right relation to God; in the second verse the mind is put into its right relation to things infinite and eternal. Thus the whole man is consecrated. "Be not conformed to this world." Why not? Because it is not a world at all, in any sense of completeness. It is too small for the mind. Even science is growing contemptuous. There was a time when the world eight thousand miles through was thought to be a great world; now it is thrown aside as something that may be called for, or may not be called for, according to the exigencies of to-morrow. Be not conformed to your cradle, O men. The cradle is a silver one, the cradle is a beautiful one. Yes, but it is a cradle still, and you are men. There was a time when it was roomy enough, the very house you wanted, better than all the king's palaces at Babylon; but now that ye have become men, that your minds are awake, that you can see the distant, and see that which to the untrained sense is invisible, be not conformed to your cradle, but be ye transformed, take on other capacities rightfully yours and claim all the worlds. For what purpose? For the purpose of making stepping-stones of them. There is not one of them on which you may not put your foot, as a man might put his foot upon a step that he might higher go. The mind is to be renewed, made new, made young, made fresh like a dewy morning, made lithe like an energy that cannot be tired. To what end? That it may become a faculty of moral criticism; that ye may prove, test, look carefully into, and know what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God; and know the will of God from that which is supposed to be the will of God; that you may have the faculty of discrimination, the judgment that will not be satisfied with broad definitions, but must go into critical distinctions, so that the mind cannot be imposed upon by a false revelation. If any man be in Christ Jesus, part of the Lord Jesus, absorbed in the Lord Jesus, you cannot palm upon him a forged epistle. Say, This we have found bearing the autograph of Paul; he needs no scholar learned in little words with all their verbal changes and alterations in order to tell him

whether it is true or not; it comes against him, and he receives it as a friend, or he comes against it, and he assaults it as an enemy. Inspiration is not in the word but in the breathed spirit, in the pleading importunity, in the dazzling wisdom, in the lofty call. The mind that has been renewed and invested with critical discrimination can read any amount of false literature, and cast it out with an ejection significant of burning contempt. We are to be able to do two things: first to find out what is the will of God, and secondly to find out the best way of doing it. This we can never do except by long days and nights spent in the school of Christ under the tuition of God the Holy Ghost.

Now the Apostle clothes himself with apostolic authority and proceeds—"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." The English can make nothing of Paul's talk. If the English language were pressed into an exact expression of Paul's conception it would sound almost grotesquely, certainly it would be heavy and distasteful to the merely literary palate. The Apostle will have every man minded to be sober-minded, minded to be modest-minded. He is not to think soberly in the sense of thinking languidly, or without the urgency of passion, but he is to think in the direction of sober thinking, to be minded to sober-mindedness, with honest clear-headed mindedness that cannot be imposed upon. By what measure is this to be measured?—"according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." That is one of the things forgotten in the Church. It is supposed that all men can have equal faith. When folly of that kind is insisted upon in the Church what wonder we have all manner of heterodoxy within its borders? One man has little faith, and you cannot give him more; another man is all faith, and he never talks in prose. The Lord gave to every man what every man has; he made one a painter, another a poet, another a preacher, another a merchantman; he made one woman bright as Elizabeth Barrett Browning, subtle as George Eliot; he made another woman the mother of the house, taking care of everything, cumbered about many things, loving all that belongs to home,



and making home the sweetest little church under the sun—all these are equally the gift of God. So in the Church he made one man possess great faith, and another man has hardly any faith at all. Is the man of little faith to be disesteemed and cast out? Verily no:—"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. . . . Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand." Only let him know that he has next to no faith and therefore ought to be a silent member of the Church; only let him know that he has no business to say who is orthodox and who is heterodox; only let the babe in the cradle take no part in household economy; then we shall have a Church marked by an infinite variety of gift, tone, colour, pulse, force; and it is for God to blend the differences into one solid harmony.

"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith." Literally: Having then gifts of grace, differing according to a sovereignty we cannot control, let us recognise differences. Of differences we have made a very vicious use. We have thought they were signs of schism, signs of separation, signs of disharmony. They are the very glory of the Church. Differences should be welcomed; contrasts should not be unknown in the kingdom of Christ. One man could not be an Arminian, another man could not be a Calvinist; one man must have all men saved, another man would be content to have a few saved if he thought that God himself wanted it to be so; the man would crush his own instincts, his own natural benevolence, if he once got hold of the prejudice that God himself only wanted a certain percentage of humanity to be saved. These men cannot live in the same Church, simply because they do not recognise differences; they are non-apostolic; they must build themselves separate sanctuaries, and worship God at different altars. Instead of this we should have in the same Church all manner of Baptists, all manner of theologians, every possible variety of thinker. We must not make God's providence monotonous, we must not take out of God's kingdom the lights that sometimes appear to cross one another. "According to the



proportion of faith": literally, according to whatever faith each man has. The words have often been prostituted to false uses,—that we must preach so much upon one subject, then so much upon another, and then rectify the balance by an allusion to other subjects. No such meaning is to be found in Paul's words; his simple meaning is, Every man has a gift of faith, and according to every man's particular gift of faith let him work, whether he be prophet or minister or servant or exhorter. Here is the reconciliation of all things. The mischief always is that the man who has little faith will quarrel with the man who is all faith. It is very rarely you hear the great dog bark, but the little dog no whip can keep quiet. Be sure that if a man has little faith he has tremendous criticism: in proportion to the littleness of his faith he is able to tell who is on the down-grade, who is on the up-grade, who is right, and who is wrong. He pronounces his own condemnation. The Apostle Paul recognises differences, proportions, dowries to start the world with: all he insists upon is personal simplicity and sincerity in the conviction wherewith we are called. Is any man called to be a poet? let him gather his singing robes around him, and awake with the lark, and sing to us from heaven's gate of the glory land and all the vision that makes heaven's eternal summer. Is any man called to be a servant? let him stoop to his work honestly and lovingly, and worshippingly, and he shall find in the ground the mystery wrought by the sun, roots rich with fruit. Is any man called to give? let him give with both hands richly, simply; "let him do it with simplicity," that is, with only one meaning. Simplicity is the single fold, open and read of all men; duplicity is the double fold, between the folds who can tell what may be hidden? complexity is the multifold; simplicity is lost. He that giveth let him give with simplicity, with an open, frank, generous nature; not asking how much other people are going to give, not making an investment of it, not causing it to suffer because being done ostentatiously, but let him give with real genuine heartiness. "He that sheweth mercy with cheerfulness." There is a mercy which says, Now behold me, I am going to be very merciful: I could crush you, but I will not; I could just simply annihilate you, but I will not; I could bring to bear upon you an instrument that would grind you to powder, but I

will not. The Apostle Paul will not have mercy of that kind. Mercy is to be radiant, tuneful, joyous, happy; mercy is to say, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; lost, and is found; make the welkin ring! The Apostle Paul will have good things done in a good way. He will have nothing slovenly. If you are called to be a prophet, prophesy according to your faculty, your spiritual gift, your immense faith. "Or ministry:" serving, that is; let us attend to our ministering our serving, and be absorbed in it. Or if we are called to teaching let us sit down with the little scholars and make them understand first the letter, then the syllable, then the word, then the thought, then the music. Or if we are called to exhortation: literally, to encouragement, to stimulate men, cheer them on under difficult tasks: let us wait on that function as if it were the greatest in the Church. If we are called to rule, let us do it "with diligence"; and if we are called to show mercy let mercy come forth, not robed in sackcloth with ashes sprinkled on its head, but let mercy be liberated like an angel, and come out to sing its pardons and proclaim its welcomes in music.

## PRAYER.

SAVIOUR of the world, open thou our eyes that we may behold wondrous things out of thy law. The law of the Lord is perfect : do thou perfect us in pureness that we may read thy book with wise and understanding minds. Help us also to begin at Moses and all the prophets, and to read in all the Scriptures the things concerning Christ. We bless thee for thy book ; it is a fountain full of water, it is a sun pouring down the morning and the noontide upon our way of life ; it is a shield and buckler, a great sword and a mighty defence, it is bread and water ; it is like its Lord, it is all things, bright, beautiful, good, and tender. Enable us to walk right through this whole paradise of revelation ; may we notice everything, may nothing escape the attention of our love : thus shall we know thy book to be like thyself, O Christ, and we shall say concerning thy book, Its name is Wonderful. We thank thee for what it has done for us ; thy book has directed our way, comforted us in our sorrow, upheld us when our poor strength was giving way ; it has been full of promises and songs to us in the time of dejection, and in the night of great fear. May we see in this land and in all the lands a revived interest in God's own book ; may we all gather around it as around the only book worth reading, because it contains the revelation of God, the music which souls need, and because in it and round about it and above it there shines a wondrous mystery of mercy and love, of sacrifice and redemption. We bless thee for all thou hast given unto us ; now wilt thou crown all thy gifts by opening our understanding that we may understand the Scripture. May the word of Christ dwell in us richly ; may we so know thy word that none can impose upon us by offering us another ; may we know thy music, thou Son of God, so well that we shall rise in instant indignation against any one who shall offer to defraud us or impose upon us. Grant unto us the great mind, the penetrating judgment, the responsive heart, which thou hast promised to those who are like little children. Make us little children in simplicity and in love, in self-distrust and in all pureness of mind ; then shall thy book be above us as the sun is above the earth, yet not too far away from the little earth to be able to warm it and gladden it, and make it bright with summer. The Lord hear us in every prayer that is breathed at the Saviour's Cross, and cleansed by the Saviour's blood. Amen.

### Romans xii. 9-21.

9-21. "From the right use of special gifts," says *The Speaker's Commentary*,  
"St. Paul passes on to enjoin principles and habits which are required in all members of Christ's body.

"'Love' comes first, both as forming a natural transition from the thoughts in ver. 8, and as the common element of the virtues which follow.

9. Let love be without dissimulation ["Let love be unfeigned." Comp.

2 Cor. vi. 6; 1 Pet. i. 22]. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

10. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love ["In brotherly love be affectionate one to another." *The Speaker's Commentary* points out that the emphatic order of the Greek is lost in the A.V.]; in honour preferring one another:

11. Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

12. Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

13. Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality [*Lit.* pursuing hospitality.]

14. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.

15. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

16. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

17-21. "From the mutual duties of brethren in Christ, St. Paul passes to the wider relations of the Christian toward all men, and especially towards his enemies.

"Enmity being the world's prevailing attitude, how must the Christian meet it?"

17. Repembrace to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest [honourable] in the sight of all men.

18. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

19. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

20. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

21. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

### THE CHRISTIAN IDEAL—(continued).

ALL this is what we ought to be and ought to do, and cannot be and cannot do. No man can live the Sermon on the Mount; it was not intended to be lived. Nor is this intended to be attained in all the perfectness of its meaning, and exemplified in all the minuteness of its spiritual beauty. It was meant as an ideal; something to look up to, something to strive after; the impossible that made the possible more glorious, more fruitful of educational results and spiritual attainments. If any man is smitten on the one cheek, he cannot turn the other also; nor was he meant to do so. The exhortation points in the direction of a Christian quality that is to be striven after, prayed for, earnestly and passionately desired, and nothing is to be done by the Christian contrary to the temper which that aspiration indicates. It is only by setting up the ideal that we can do anything worth doing in the actual. No man is ever satisfied with his work;

at best he says, It will do until to-morrow ; then I shall improve the colour, then I shall ease the stiffness, then I shall introduce the mystery of distance, then I shall call in the wizardry of atmosphere ; meanwhile, this poor hand is tired, and I lay down my instruments and implements ; I must sleep myself into some larger faculty. The ideal is not meant to be mocked, it is meant to be striven after. We could not have the possible but for the impossible, the actual but for the poetic and ideal ; we could not have the artificial light but for the sun. It is the lofty that makes the lowly what it is, in quality, in loveliness, in fascination. It is eternity that makes time worth living.

“Let love be without dissimulation.” The young know what a dissyllable is ; it is a word of two syllables : “dissimulation” is something of two images ; plainly, we call it two faces ; speaking of some persons we say, They are very two-faced. That is to say, they are hypocrites ; they smile with one face and frown with another ; they speak honied words, but the poison of asps is under their tongue ; they can look what they do not mean. If this word were put in a picture, then it would be represented by two faces ; one expressing one emotion, and the other expressing quite a contrary feeling. Paul says, Let there be no hypocrisy in love. The very word “love” ought to be its own protection. Love is one of the substantives that can dispense with epithets. You must not even put a diamond on a wedding ring. The wedding ring is so sensitive it would be hurt by pearl and ruby ; it must be magnificent in its simplicity. You must not put epithets to love ; it would be like jewelling a wedding ring. Let love be without two-facedness, hypocrisy, double-dealing ; let there be no words used that are ambiguous or that can be used in two-shaded senses. Not only must there be no possibility of contrast in the uses of love ; there must be no possibility of shading one meaning into another. This is to be the spirit of the Church ; a great, honest, frank, radiant love : not necessarily a blindness to infirmity, to disability, but love triumphing over disability, infirmity, and drawback of every kind. It is not love that loves only the lovely. That is refined or calculated selfishness. It is not love that takes out of the orphanage the golden-hair, the blue-eye, the sweet

little voice full of meaning and full of possibility, of strength, and grace. That were no love. Love will say, Give me the cripple, the infirm one that nobody else would be troubled with, the ill-looking one ; for even ugliness may be refined into beauty, by gentle care, by the education of watchfulness and the motherliness of love : give me the one that everybody else has left. That is love. Yet we say, How kind to have taken a child out of the orphanage, such a beautiful little thing ! It is never kind to hang a picture ; it is never a mark of divine condescension on the part of man to adorn his chamber with the loveliest work of art : he is kind who takes in the child that everybody else has refused.

Where love is frank, pure, simple, one-visaged, there will come an abhorrence of that which is evil, and a cleaving to that which is good (ver. 9). The word "Abhor" is intense. Too much emphasis cannot be imported into its utterance. The very enunciation of the word should itself be a kind of shot or cannon ball. When evil hears how it is regarded it should stagger and fall back to the ground dead. Good is not to be daintily handled, as if we could take it up and set it down and change its position and make a convenience of it : we are to cleave to, to hang on by, to stick to, as for grim life and death. That is how a man is to keep his pledge, his vow ; that is how he is to honour his consecration words. Here is the explanation of backsliding, apostasy, dereliction of every grade and form. Men do not abhor that which is evil ; their gorge does not rise, their passion does not flame ; they are willing that the evil beast should enter the sanctuary and sit down awhile, though the hospitality be but scant. Evil can live on little ; if there is any hospitality at all, that will do to begin with. Evil is a hound that can pick up a living on the floor. It is not to be admitted into the place at all ; it is to be encountered at the front door with iron, at the back door with steel, at every window with cannon. Can this be done ? Not wholly, not in its ideal sublimity ; but it is along this line that our efforts are to be made. Men could certainly do more of this work of abhorrence if they chose to do it. No man must find an excuse in the impossibility of fulfilling the ideal. He who does all that is possible entitles himself to do next that which is ideal.



"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love." That is difficult. There is a Christian brotherhood that is partial. There are Christians who could not sit in a church where very poor people had sat. There are those who, not disposed to question the theology of anybody, would yet prefer to have a pew that nobody else sat in—a pew with a padlock; they do not know what is meant by the expressive phrase, "The enthusiasm of humanity." Such people do not see the humanity, they only see the clothes; they do not see the man in the sinner, and therefore they do not see the Christ of God in any act of providence or redemption. The idea is wholly based upon the family conception. The Church is to be a family, and the spirit of the family is to be a spirit of affectionateness. There is an affectionateness that is very dainty, exclusive. There is a handkshaking that hands the man away. He who has studied handshaking has studied human nature. It cannot be mimicked. Any man's handshake reveals him instantly, and he cannot help it. You need not go any further than taking hold of a man's hand to know what is in his soul. You must of course take him off his guard; if he has prepared himself for the occasion he may deceive even the very elect: but take him the days of the week through, and his hand reveals him. Life is subtle, life is expressive; the character is in every glance and touch and breathing. The quality of the family intercourse is therefore to be a quality of affection.

"... in honour preferring one another." More literally, In honour anticipating one another,—who to be most courteous, who to be first, civil, gentle, helpful. To anticipate is to do before what somebody else was going to do. Hence we say: I have been anticipated: My remarks have been anticipated: My action was anticipated by a day, a week, a month; that is to say, some former speaker has advanced what a succeeding speaker was about to enunciate; some friendly hand has done a week before what another friendly hand was going to do if he had not been forestalled. But anticipation is a critical act. It is not to be done pedantically. There is an effusive courtesy that is hypocrisy; there is a fussy anticipation that cannot live more than a day, because it wears itself out by its unnatural energy;

there is an occasional fickle showing of courtesy which is worse than discourtesy itself, because it excites hopes and then disappoints them; it creates an impression favourable to the doer, and then it obliterates that impression, or substitutes for it one that is ungracious. Christian idealism is to be unconscious of its own excellence; it must move with the easy grace that is not aware of its own gracefulness. There must be no violence even in the act of being courteous. A man must not so anticipate another as to outrun and thrust him aside that he himself may gain some honour. There is a withdrawment in favour of another that is as graceful as an advance expressive of personal interest. This cannot be taught in the schools. No man can aspire after this as a mere task-learner or a mere hireling. All this mutual affection, mutual honour, anticipation of courteous service and action, comes out of profound, vital communion with God. No soul can be bathed as it were in the fellowship of Divine communion, and then descend to earth to play the bore, the bully, or the fool. We should know how far any man has been up in heaven by the gentleness and loveliness, the purity and the beauty, of his social behaviour.

“Not slothful in business.” This is a favourite motto with Christian merchants. They quote it as if they lived it. There is an almost suspicious familiarity about the method of the quotation. They will hurry through the morning prayer, yea even through the morning meal, a still greater sacrifice, and leaping to their feet will say, “Not slothful in business!” That is very admirable, but it has nothing whatever to do with this particular text. There are many Biblical texts that urge to industry, faithfulness, mercantile energy, and the like: but this word “business” has no commercial element in it. Where now your plea for abbreviating the morning meal and neglecting the morning psalm? You pleaded apostolic authority for non-apostolic action. What is the “business” referred to by the Apostle? It is spiritual business; it is intercourse with God, it is business with heaven, it is commerce with the skies, it is intercourse with eternity: there, within that line, conduct your imports and exports—your imports of grace Divine, eternal; your exports of hosannas, hallelujahs, doxologies, praises, psalms of

adoration and thankfulness. The Apostle warns us against slothful piety,—piety that takes everything for granted, and that says if it does not pray, some other people will pray; and if it is laggardly in the song, the music will be taken up vigorously by other singers and minstrels. The Church has sunk into slothfulness of piety. The Saviour said, “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” The word business is apparently the same in both instances, but in the instance of Christ it is, “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s house?” That is the same inner meaning, the same Divine consecration, impulse, and sacrifice,—Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s house, in my Father’s house, in the very centre of it, carrying all its burden, unveiling all its intents, uttering all its music, teaching all its teachers? for me there is no habitation beyond the sanctuary. That is the meaning of the term. So henceforth we must not plead apostolic authority for neglecting Divine obligations.

“Fervent in spirit.” What is the meaning of “fervent”? It is the positive aspect of that which precedes. We have first a negative condition—namely, Not slothful in spiritual commerce; then we have an opposite quality, “fervent in spirit.” Here we need another picture to represent the idea to the young, a companion picture to that which typifies the meaning of dissimulation. The meaning of fervent is hot; more than hot, boiling; more than boiling, boiling over. Yes, that is it,—ebullient, rising up in fiery bubbles and foam, and overflowing by reason of its ardent energy. Such piety would not be tolerated to-day; it would be called fanaticism, insobriety; it would be regarded as a great remove from religious propriety. What we want to-day is nothing to object to. A great London merchant said to me that even a man of education will go through his place, and the highest compliment he will pay to the finest works in his establishment is, “There is nothing to object to there.” The only thing to object to is that man himself. Think of beauty being dishonoured by a look from such eyes of ignorance! Yet this is what we have to contend with. Our epithets are now such as, Very quiet, Very nice, Very proper, Nothing to object to, Always really quite in accordance with good manners,

and Everything was done very placidly. Will you quote the chapter and the verse that commends such epithets and descriptions as applied to Christian service and sanctuary life? It is supposed that there are some epistles that have been lost; what those epistles contained I do not know, but if they contained any such suggestions as yours I can recognise the hand of Providence in their having been lost. Boiling in spirit, ebullient in spirit, running over in spirit, reaching the highest temperature in spiritual zeal.

“Serving the Lord,”—as if doing that alone; seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness: serving God on the knees; working for God and working with God. But inasmuch as there is very little working now, what wonder that there should be no real service of the Lord in many directions? Work is now looked upon as servile. He who would find an honest man, an *Adam Bede*, a soul that lived in his carpentry, would find a man to be honoured. But the decadence did not begin at the mechanical point; the decadence began within. When a man’s fervour in religious service cools, his fingers lose their cunning, their energy, their industry, and their work of the world goes down from solidity to superficiality and felony.

We now come to exhortations which we in degenerate days cannot understand:—“Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.” All that is a foreign tongue to us. It is impossible to us because of our circumstances. A man cannot pray over wine. No man knows what the meaning of “rejoicing in hope” is, who has plenty of money, abounding health, and troops of friends. The people to whom these exhortations were addressed sat in sevenfold night, were searched and torn by the tribulum. They had nought to live on but their prayers. They little thought that the time would come when such expressions as these would lose all meaning in the Church in any section of the world or in any period of civilisation. “Distributing to the necessity of saints.” All that is passed. We now exchange courtesies; we give and take. That is not the meaning of distributing to the necessity of saints. Saints were hunted men, the hounds were after them! if there was any light

behind it was the light of some shining weapon lifted in murderous purpose; so the door had to be opened quietly, just enough to get the saint inside, that he might be nursed and fed and comforted, for he had hazarded his life for the Lord Jesus. We never hazarded a limb for the Son of God. "Given to hospitality." We do not understand the meaning of that expression. Bishops are to be given to hospitality, and yet they cannot be given to hospitality because they have no opportunity. "Hospitality" is not a word that has retained its best meanings. Here again we come upon interchange and exchange; as, for example, he who bids to the feast expects himself to be bidden. That is not hospitality, that is natural and legitimate enjoyment; within its own limits it is proper, and a necessary development of civilisation: but keeping to the text, and to the limits of the apostolic exhortation, the men who were exhorted to be given to hospitality were men who had the care of the church, men who only got bread into the house that they might give it away. There may be a dozen saints here to-night, quoth the old Christian; I must see that I have bread enough for the children; we may be called at midnight: what have we in the house? There are tokens of storm in the air, and the enemy may pounce upon the little churches here and there; see to it that the fire go not out; do not let it blaze too briskly, or the light may be suspected by the enemy, and our very hospitality may be turned to a disadvantage: be careful to draw the curtain, but let the light be ready, and let it not take long to bring the bread out: let us pray for opportunities to give all this bread away. The heroic days of Christianity are dead, in some localities.

"... condescend to men of low estate." Here we want another picture. The literal meaning is, Be in the stream with them. Do not go down, as who should say, Now I am going to condescend to you, watch how I make the descent. This is not to be an occasional patronage, it is to be a continual brotherhood in living sympathy. Some men can only mix with a certain kind of men. Some persons would not break bread with you, and their bread would poison them if they attempted to break it with me—they do not know me. He who is advanced in the



Christian life can sit down beside a man whom socially he dislikes. Within what limits are these questions to be settled? If it is a question of personal taste, personal enjoyment, how many persons could we dismiss from the circle of our acquaintance! We are not to live wholly among one set, or we shall go down—down in quality, down in compass of mind, down in range of heart. We are to know all kinds of men. It was a “multitude” that followed Christ, and if there were any he did not know it was the respectable people. This man hath gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.

“Be not wise in your own conceits”: take counsel with one another. Something may be learned even from a fool; let others speak upon the subject. You need not believe all that they say; they need not necessarily be all philosophers of a very high stamp and quality, but out of the mouths of babes and sucklings the Lord hath ordained praise. Sometimes the word of light comes from persons whom we had not credited with the possession of any illuminating power. Listen well; be good hearers: do not suppose that you are infallible, and then go out to condemn any pope.

“. . . give place unto wrath.” Here we want a fourth picture. It is the idea of standing back that God may work. I am not to stand between God and the object of his providence or ministry; I am to give place to the cannon ball, and it will strike the right object; I am to stand back and let the sword fall where God means it to fall. He is a fool who does his own vengeance—“Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt” take the right vengeance upon him. No other religion ever said this. Some religions have tried to say part of it. Mohammedanism says a little part of it. There is a creed which says, If thine enemy be up to the knees in water, offer him a hand; if he be up to the waist in water, offer him a hand; if he be up to the chin in water, put thine hand upon him and drown him. No other religion can go so far as Christianity. Because the Cross works these miracles the Cross shall stand for ever—the wonder, the refuge, the hope of the world.



## PRAYER. ✕

**ALMIGHTY God**, we thank thee for thy word. It is eternal music; it comes into our hearts by right; it knows us, it searches us, it brings thee to our love and faith; it opens a way into thy heavens. Thy word has been our strength, our guide and glory all our life; it is so now more than ever. Thy word grows in beauty; thy word is tenderer to us in our distress, more stimulating to us in our indifference, more encouraging to us in the hours of hopelessness: may thy word continue to be our light and our defence, our comforter and our counsellor all the days of our life. Our days are but a handful at the most; the days of our years are threescore years and ten, if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; it is soon cut off and we fly away, and are forgotten. Yet if we be in thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord, if we know the fellowship of his sufferings and the power of his resurrection, we shall be where he is, in life eternal, in peace unspeakable. Help us to bring the power of an endless life to bear upon the concerns of these coming and going years; may we know the years that are at thy right hand, then we shall care less and yet care more for the years that give us our opportunities now. For all thy goodness we bless thee. We never thought to see the dawning year; yet, behold thou hast sent it upon us; it is full of promise, it is charged with silent music; we receive it as the gift of God; help us to see it conscientiously, reverently, industriously, and hopefully. May every man resolve not to be the first to speak words of unkindness; may every heart know the joy, the glowing love of forgiveness; may all men stand in a new and higher relation to one another, because of a larger and clearer vision of the Saviour of the world. May this be the best year in our lives; may every day be a long day, may every night be a short night, because of the depth and dreamlessness of our sleep; and may all we think and see, all we purpose and execute, begin, continue, and end in the Lord Jesus. Thus shall the year be all summer, and at night we shall see the vision of God and be thankful. Pity those who begin the year with special trouble, to whom the year is but a new and larger anxiety; look upon hearts that are made bitter with grief, look upon eyes that cannot yet see because of their tears, and sanctify to us all the discipline of life. Especially be with those who are broken-hearted because of domestic sorrow, the wandering child, the prodigal son, the vacant chair, the shattered vow: and give joy upon joy to those whose households are made dear by thy presence and tender by thy love. The Lord hear us, and read himself with his own kind eyes the prayers that are written upon our hearts, but may not be spoken; seeing that we pray at the Cross, the holy, wondrous Cross—the Altar of blood. Amen.

## Romans xiii.

## IDEAL SOCIETY.

THIS is rough reading for the nineteenth century. It was not written in this century, or under the circumstances which constitute the aspect and responsibility of this age. It may be none the less applicable. It is the glory of the Bible that it contains principles which know nothing about time or space as constituting limit. On the other hand, we must read the Bible in the light of current necessity, established history, enlightened reason, and sensitive and active conscience. What application these words had to the people to whom they were written would be evident to themselves. It is perfectly certain that this passage is not to be taken literally and absolutely, but spiritually, and according to the religious conscience and understanding of men.

“Let every soul” (ver. 1). That is a Hebraism. “Let every person” would amply express the apostolic idea. The Hebrew is fond of the word “soul.” When men go in companies they say there were so many hundred souls; when the census was taken in the olden time the return was given in souls. Yet we must not reduce this wholly to a letter. A religious meaning may be hidden even in this word “soul.” Yet let us not overstrain the emphasis. The word “soul” ought, indeed, to be its own emphasis, touching as it does all that is highest and noblest in the constitution of human nature. Yet the appeal is to the soul, and the soul must not be treated as dead, irresponsible, irrational, and as having no voice in the matter. It is the peculiarity of the soul, as we understand that term, that it can ask questions, reason, compare, conduct retrospective inquiry, and look at all things in a large, moral, and philosophic light. “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.” This is ideal. This is not actual, but this is what ought to be. In properly constituted society there will be sovereignty; not always personal sovereignty; sometimes the sovereignty may be democratic, that is to say, it may represent the reason, the conscience, and the will of the whole people. The whole people

constitute themselves into a sovereignty, and they must obey themselves as so constituted. There is a point at which we lose our individuality; we become merged into the larger life, the commonwealth, and it is at that point of merging that we must be morally alert and sensitive. There are some who like to give their individuality away, because they know they are making a small donation to the common good. There are those whose individuality has made society possible under God. There are men amongst us who ought to be very careful how they seek to reduce even the aggressiveness of some sorts of individuals. There is an indifference that would be only too glad to keep its head upon its downy pillow, and to murmur there under the warm and comforting clothing—This belongs to everybody; let them do it: I do not care to obtrude my individuality upon the commonwealth. Such slumberers never made history. They have made history difficult; they have enfeebled many an effort made by the spirit of progress. That there is an individualism too aggressive, too self-assertive, may be granted, but we owe much to the individualism which has insisted upon the right of private judgment, the right of conscience, the liberty of the soul; and we owe much to that individuality which has said, even to the State, We only obey you as we see God in you.

The Apostle is careful in all this reasoning to introduce the word "God" at four points. If the argument is a geometric structure, then at every corner there is God. You must not debase God by putting up a drunken magistrate, and calling him the vice-regent of heaven. Because God is in the text all the powers will fall into right relation and perspective. This is a committee of the whole nation, with God at the head of it; as is the head, so must be the members: we must not have a head of light and a body of darkness, a head of spiritual loveliness and a body corrupt and given over to work all uncleanness with eagerness. The Apostle is conducting an argument in which he can familiarly use the word God. Some terms clear a space for themselves, define the application of the whole of the remainder of the argument. This is emphatically a case of this sort. The rulers ought to be appointed by the people. When the Lord has sent a man to lord it over the people, he has sent him to punish,

not to bless the nation. The people had no business to ask for a king, and thus to heathenise themselves, in the olden time; but the Lord said, "Yes" to their ignorant and selfish prayer. The Lord granted the petition of their vanity. Sometimes the Lord grants us our request, and sends leanness into our hearts. We have no king but Christ, we have no sovereign but God. We have no hierarchy but the High Priest himself who is entitled to his hierarchic glory because of his human suffering: he has won the throne by the Cross: honour and majesty and dominion and power be unto him who sitteth upon the throne; for a throne sits upon the Cross. If the powers that be are ordained ideally by God, people should be very careful how they constitute those powers. Never let us believe that anybody will do for prime minister or judge or magistrate or leader or president. He who is at the head should be at the head in every sense—intellectually, religiously, sympathetically—should entitle himself to be at the head, not by some vote which means success of partisanship, but by the right eternal of superior mind and superior character. That is the tendency of all society under Christian inspiration. That tendency cannot realise its issue all at once. History requires plenty of elbow-room. We must not be impatient with venerable, solemn, slow-going history. History rubs nothing out. They who want to write fluently and dashingly may have a good deal of obliteration and interlineation to do, but grim, solemn, majestic, wrinkled history never erases, but keeps on the record, and says, To the record must be your appeal. Yet there is a spirit in society and civilisation, called tendency. The tendency may be upward and may require almost mathematical investigation to detect its inclination; sometimes the tendency may be downward, and so minutely and microscopically downward, that there may be contention as to its trend: but the Lord is seeing to it that the tendency of things is towards the consolidation, the purity, and the consequent sovereignty of manhood. Jesus Christ was the Son of man: every woman was his mother; every man his brother. If the Jew was ever on him it was but for a moment, it fell off, and he stood up, in the garment that vindicated the election of God, to be the true and eternal Adam of the new race. The time must not be forced. It is written in the books that the day

shall dawn when we shall have no king but Christ, when every man will be king over himself because he has been crucified with Christ; when there will be no need to cry Order, for the spirit of order will be in the human mind and the human heart, and every man will anticipate every other man in actions of peacefulness, harmony, and practical music. We should insult some magistrates if we told them they were appointed of God. They would know that we were not serious. We know how they were appointed, but for want of frankness we allow them to sit out their little twelvemonth and quietly vanish among the shadows. It would distress our reason, not to say our conscience, to recognise in some men true kings, true judges, and true leaders of the world. Sometimes we are driven to think that there must be some little mischievous grinning sprite that throws out offices and dignities, never imagining that certain men will have the ineffable impudence to take them up. Yet there is before us the ideal picture of divinely-constituted and divinely-ruled society.

When there is a bad law, what have we to do? We have first to try to amend it; secondly, we have to try to amend it; thirdly, we have to try to amend it; and fourthly, failing, we have to break it. But if the great men of the Church say it is the law, what have we then to do? To break it. Not at first, not wantonly, not violently, not foolishly. No great purpose is ever served by mere wantonness and defiance, but there comes a time when men must go to prison rather than obey certain laws; and if certain men had not gone to prison certain other men never could have gone to church. It is a misconception of history which leads us to think that our privileges have come to us by chance. If we have any liberties, other men secured them for us. We dishonour the dead if we do not live in the spirit of their heroism. We may not be able to exemplify it under the same conditions or on the same scale; but a man can be a hero if he wants to be one—in the conquest of his temper, in the sovereignty of his passions, in the conquest of himself in matters of taste, so that he shall go in many directions which would have ruffled him so long as he was of the earth earthy, and of the flesh fleshly. Every man has opportunity to show



that he has in him at least the making of a hero, and Christ so judges mankind, that if he sees anybody who would have been a hero if he could, he will give him a hero's heaven. There are some so dainty that they will not break a law. The only law that is not to be broken is the eternal law. Laws of human kind, laws as constituted by Plato, and as suggested by the founders of society, were temporary, relative, excellent for the time, or the only possible thing that could have been done at the time; all such laws must "widen with the process of the suns"; such laws were made for man; man was not made for such laws. If there is any law that hinders Christian brotherhood, amend it; failing to amend it, trample it under foot: but if that should involve loss of living, blessed be God for such poverty, it is the true wealth.

What remains, then, as the perpetual law? That is stated:—"Owe no man any thing, but to love one another." The meaning is, Though you have rendered tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, honour to whom honour, there is something over and above that fills up all the interstices; and that surplus divinest something is love. You could not shut up the action of love in ver. 7. That verse is arithmetical, statistical; it is a kind of pence-table of the time. "Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour." A pagan could have written that programme; it required a Christian to write this supplement—Owe no man any thing but love. And love is a debt you can never discharge. When you have paid it you have only acknowledged it; when you have strained yourself to love some other human creature you have only begun to realise the meaning of the Divine sovereignty. He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love: "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,"—his love, not a little surface rain that sprinkled the leaves and stems of things, but a plentiful baptism of the heart that went down to springs and roots, filling and reviving and blessing all. Nor must this be regarded as mere sentiment. Mere sentiment is never found in the Gospel of Christ. A religion founded on a Cross soon puts an end to all



mere sentiment. It is the Cross that determines the quality of all that follows. If any man bring his little offering of sentiment the Lord will say to him, One thing thou lackest—Crucifixion.

See how wide is the application of this great principle of owing every man love. It means that the strong owe their strength to the weak. When a man is very strong he by his very strength says to all weak people: Draw upon me: so long as I have a pulse left no man shall hurt you without at least protest from me. If any man have the gift of speech, he owes it to the dumb. Make the dumb understand that when eloquence is needed they can call upon you; you will open your mouth for the dumb, and plead the cause of those who have no words. If any man have wealth, he holds it as a trustee for the needy and honourable poor. If any man has influence, he says to those who are honestly seeking to live in the world an honourable life, What influence I have belongs to you: call upon me: I owe you this, not as a patronage, but as a duty: I hold it for another. When the Christian realises that spirit and assumes that attitude we shall know the meaning of apostolic usages, especially the usage which is described as having all things common,—not in some little narrow arithmetical and changeable sense, in which life shall become a scramble and strength shall be only wanton might, but in the sense of brotherhood, sympathy, rejoicing with those who do rejoice, and weeping with those who weep, and carrying half the burden of the man who is overloaded. “He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.” That application is so wide that it can scarcely be described in words. The Apostle clusters the commandments—“Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment [if there be any other mechanical stipulation, any other requirement of decency and good behaviour], it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (ver. 9). Some men cannot attack the commandments one by one. Other men can do nothing else; they are great at commandment-keeping. One young man said, “All these”—throwing a sort of frivolous emphasis into the word “these”—“have I kept from my youth

up": I am a respectable young man. The Master said, Thou hast not begun to keep any one of them yet. Other men come into the sanctuary through great emotional experiences; they are, so to say, borne in upon a flood of noblest feeling, holiest sense of obligation and brotherhood, and they begin to keep the Commandments from the other end. The action need not be reversed or interrupted or criticised in a hostile spirit. Every man must work according to his own gift, and according to his own faculty and temperament, and opportunity: the one thing to be attended to is this, that every effort must end in holiness.

The Apostle was great when he touched the subject of love. He outran John, and John was no slow runner in this garden of love. But when you get a great intellect really fired nothing can love like it. It begins argumentatively and massively, and reasons and analyses and combines and protests; but let it go on; the more it prays the nearer it is coming to the burning point: another vision of Christ, and that great, stupendous intellect shall become a fountain of tears, and Paul shall write the anthem of Christian love. John shall talk about it on his level, in a sweet, tuneful, flowery way, but when the Apostle, the sovereign Apostle, comes to take it up, his anthem will silence for the time all other music.

Paul could not conclude this chapter without a grand religious exhortation, and that religious exhortation explains all he has been talking about:—

"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand." (vers. 11, 12.)

Let there be no chaffering about magistracies, let there be no debate and controversy about mere matters of detail: this is not the time, the Apostle would have said, to be rearranging judicial benches and magisterial appointments, and inquiring into mere matters of adjustment and detail: Brethren, he would say, why talk upon these subjects? The day is at hand, already the silver light is on the eastern hills; an hour more and the King will be here. This was the apostolic music always. They all expected the Lord coming instantaneously as it were. There are annotators upon the Scriptures who want to make out a contrary view, and

I cannot follow them ; and I make no attempt to represent them, but to represent my own thought. It seems to me that the Apostles expected the Lord every moment,—he will be here presently, so let all little subjects alone, “ Let us walk honestly, as in the day ; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying ” (ver. 13), but let us get our clothes on, the robe of beauty, for the Lord has already taken the first step out of heaven, and he will be here before you get your garments on if you do not make haste. “ But put ye on the Lord Jesus ” : garb yourselves in the raiment of heaven, for Christ will be here presently to claim us and to announce the festival. The Apostles were, in detail, wrong ; they were, in principle, right.

There are persons who are now expecting the Lord coming in a kind of handbill way, so they are announcing “ The Second Coming of the Lord : Lecture in The Back Street at eight o'clock, by—” I forget whom. Ah me ! that is not the Lord's way. O fools, and slow of heart ! he has come, he is coming, he is always coming. I saw him this morning ; I spoke to him not a minute ago ; he is with us now. Such is the mystery of the kingdom of God. It cometh not by observation ; it is not a great caravan shaped in clouds, that some clever man will first see, and announce to other clever men, that they may get ready while all the sinners are scourged down to hell. That is not our Christ. The dear Lord came when the sun rose this morning. Nay, he was here, or the sun would not have risen ; he never went away during all the cold and fog of the night ; he glittered in every star, he looked down upon us from every height ; he laid his fingers upon our eyelids and gave his beloved sleep. In every noble impulse, in every yearning after immortality, in every pang of soul-hunger that calls for the bread of life, he came, and is coming : we have but to say to him, Lord, abide with us ! to find him house-room, find him a guest-chamber in the heart. They who take this view never can be inactive, never can be worldly, selfish, paltering in their policy ; because they know that they are entertaining a Guest whose presence makes every chamber in the heart-house a sanctuary. Even so, Lord Jesus come—quickly !

## Romans xiv.

### APOSTOLIC ADMONITIONS.

**I**T is important to know to what subjects the Apostle Paul is confining his attention in his chapter upon Christian casuistry. He is not talking about the distinction between eternal right and eternal wrong: he is alluding wholly to questions of opinion, ceremony, ritual, formality, mechanical adjustment, and the like. This clears the ground of a thousand difficulties. "In every work regard the author's end." The Apostle is not submitting the Cross of Christ for diversity of opinion; he is not submitting the doctrine of the Holy Ghost, and saying to men, You can believe it or not, and the one shall just be as good as the other. In reality these are not vital questions, and yet they are questions which come up again and again, especially in early Christian experience; and to these questions which come and go the Apostle is now directing his entire attention. This chapter has been wrested, so that men have built upon it doctrines of the most objectionable kind. They have exaggerated liberty into licentiousness; they have been irreverent or indifferent or defiant, and have quoted this chapter in support of their erratic spirit and conduct. They are wholly wrong. They have forgotten what the Apostle was dealing with. It has been supposed that he was dealing with the greatest questions, whereas he was only adjusting matters of casuistry, and endeavouring to find a point of harmony and reconciliation amid tumults that were dividing the Church in a very immature state of Christian experience. Let us follow the Apostle in his reasoning according to this light.

Paul being himself a strong man, almost equally strong at every point, had a distinct doctrine about weak people. The Apostle was always careful about the 'weak brother.' Yet he

discharged his conscience in reference to that man by distinctly calling him weak. He never left that man under the impression that he was as good as anybody else; he always laid his hand upon the lame limb and said, You are a cripple. He never failed to point out the sightless eye, and to say, You do not see as well as some other people see. He never told the weak man a lie. Steadily and frankly he persevered in telling the weak man that he was weak, and that if anything was done on his account, it was done simply because a good many things are done for the sake of the baby of the household. But because all these concessions are made to him he does not cease to be a baby. "Him that is weak in the faith,"—not the faith as represented in a body of theology, which is often erroneously and mischievously called "the faith"; as if any words of man's collocation could swing themselves around the infinite circumference of God's truth. Rather, him that is weak in faith, a mere child in trust; the infantile man, doubtful, cloudy, timid, groping, uncertain; willing to be right, but a very long way from having attained the sacred purpose. ". . . receive ye": let him come into the house, find a position for him in the Church, enrol him on the register of those who have espoused the Cross as the symbol of their life, and the plea of their soul. But when you receive him do not make him, as the Puritans would say, question-sick. Do not receive him for the purpose of disputing with him. Seldom is any good done to a man by arguing with him about anything. The weaker he is the more disposed he will be to argue. He may have lost all his limbs, but he still retains that mischievous tongue. When you receive into the Church a man who is weak in faith, do not attempt to talk to him about his doubts. The more you talk to him about them the more he will doubt. Set before him a heroic life, show him what you do under the inspiration of religious trust, put his disputatiousness to shame by your self-sacrifice: he will soon find that he is no longer eloquent, but only a poor chatterer of words; he will withdraw his lame arguments in the presence of your burning holiness.

Then the Apostle comes into the detail of casuistical questions:—"For one believeth that he may eat all things ;

another, who is weak, eateth herbs." We have nothing to do with these questions. The difficulty was about meats offered to idols. The question arose, Is it right to eat such meats? They have been laid upon forbidden altars, they have been mentioned under names that should be unknown in the Christian sanctuary: have they ceased to be legitimate foods? have they ceased to be nutritious meats? Ought they to be taken at the base altars and thrown into the black river, to be taken whither the river may flow? Or have they not been desecrated? are the meats still good for use? is there a healthy purpose to be served by eating them? The Apostle says, Brethren, if you think you ought not to eat these meats, let them alone: your duty is clear. But, on the other hand, another man says, The meat cannot be desecrated; it has been put to a foolish purpose religiously, but the meat, as meat, is just as good as ever, and I intend to eat it. Then, says the Apostle, you are at liberty to carry out your notions: you need not debate these things; for the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; it is not this view of flesh meat, and this view of vegetables, and this view of discipline; the kingdom of God is not built upon that narrow basis; it is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; a grand spiritual revelation, a holy mystery. They who would bring it under discussion as relating to ceremonies of any kind would desecrate the very religion which they profess to honour.

"Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not." That is the danger of strength. Power is always likely to become contemptuous. Sheer strength is not the glory of any man. God's power is nothing but for God's mercy. The mercy that withholds the power is greater than the power would be without the mercy. When a man is himself well reformed he is apt to despise the ignorant. No truly educated man will ever despise the struggling honest mind; no really refined soul will remark upon the want of refinement in others. Partial education will be severe: whatever approaches complete education will in that measure be self-controlled, well regulated, and will be held in a spirit of modesty and trusteeship, and not in a spirit of arrogance and independence. "... and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth." The danger of weakness is fault-finding,



Here is a poor cripple who cannot get off his stool : but what a tongue he has, what a file of a tongue, what a rasping tongue ! How he finds fault with minister, office-bearer, fellow-member, fellow-student, fellow-worshipper ! Hear how he riles and reviles, and how exasperating is his talk. Weak ! see his weakness in his criticism, his fault-finding, his love of discovering weakness, or imagining it, in the character of other men. Here are two difficulties to be avoided. Paul says, *You are a strong man : do not be contemptuous.* Then he says, *You are a weak man : do not be fault-finding, censorious, and seeking to make up for intellectual and spiritual weakness by a rasping criticism.* The weak man, however, is in more danger than the strong man. Strength can be patient, modest, tranquil : but weakness is always seeking self-compensation,—What can I do to make myself seen and heard and felt ? Weakness will send a man into severe punishment for a mistake in spelling, in punctuation, in dating a letter : and yet that same weakness will one day be found to have misspelt every word, to have mispointed every paragraph, and to have mistaken the whole gist and purpose of life. Wherever you find a censorious man you find a weak man. There are some persons cursed with the genius of criticism.

Why is the strong man to refrain from contempt ? Why is the weak man to refrain from censoriousness ? Paul gives the reason at the close of the third verse—"for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant ?" That is the annihilating question. It brings every man up sharply, when he is asked to produce his title. You find fault with the minister ! produce your title to open your mouth in any respectable company. You find fault with your fellow-worshipper ! you say you could not do as he does ; how he does it you cannot conceive : who art thou ? who asked you to conceive anything ? who ever troubled you with an inquiry addressed to your imagination ? Let him that is without sin cast the first stone. If there is a perfect man let him rise. We should listen to his impeccability with the modesty due to deity. When men attend to their own faults they will be surprised how very little time is left to attend to the faults of other people. Are you aware that, when you are finding fault so glibly with men who

have forgotten more than you ever had the capacity to acquire, there are those who are stigmatising you as little, miserable, foolish, objectionable, detestable—a man they would not have within their threshold ?

Is there then no standard of responsibility? The Apostle answers the question—"To his own master he standeth or falleth. . . . We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. . . . Every one of us shall give account of himself to God." It is because there is a standard set up by hands Divine that we are not called upon to play the judge over one another. The universe does not begin and end in our individuality. Let no man suppose that he can escape final criticism : but the glory and the advantage of that criticism are to be found in its perfectness, for it will be conducted by him who knows us in and out, through and through, ancestrally, and circumstantially. Remember it is because there is an eternal judgment seat that we are released from the necessity of fault-finding, criticism, and judgment. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves . . . Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." The time of judgment is not yet. There may be tares among the wheat of your neighbour's character ; let both grow together until the harvest ; the discriminating angels will separate the one from the other. If we must be frank, and, indeed, what may appear to be objectionable, let us do it as if we would rather not do it ; never let us do it defiantly, boastfully, vain-gloriously, as who should say, I have an eye for faults : beware how you conduct yourselves in my presence. Let us rather fall down in self-accusation, and venture with timid modesty to exercise the work of criticism where it is needful such work should really be done.

The Apostle proceeds to deal with special cases :—"One man esteemeth one day above another : another esteemeth every day alike." Here is the importance of the principle with which we started. About what days is the Apostle talking? Not about the Sabbath day at all. No man can have what he believes to be a Divine commandment steadily before his eyes, and then say to all other men, You can treat that commandment just as you please : if you like it, keep it ; if you do not like it, neglect

it: it really makes no matter; please yourselves. The Apostle could not so conduct a Christian argument. He is talking about days that have been set aside by scribes and Pharisees, and pedants and Judaisers and interlopers, and inventors of ceremonies and festivals and observances. One man finds it good to fast one day in the week; Paul says, Then by all means let him fast, because he finds it good for his soul thus to punish his body. Another man finds it quite possible to pray after every meal and to make every meal a sacrament; he has no need to take a day out of the week for the purpose of religious fasting; the Apostle says, Then by all means let him have the liberty of his own judgment and conscience; where there is no written, distinct, positive law men are left to realise the circumstances in the light of their own experience, and they are entitled to enjoy the liberty of their spiritual conviction. This is apostolic doctrine. But the man who fasts cannot let the man who feasts alone: the man who feasts finds it difficult not to remark upon the ascetic who has his days of fasting. Thus liberty is impugned, thus liberty is dishonoured. The Church which ought to represent every possible variety of opinion upon disputed questions is turned into a bear-garden. It should be the glory of the Church that it can differ and yet agree. The Church will never be one in mere matters of opinion. The Lord allows the liberty of individual judgment upon a thousand questions. They may be questions of climate, circumstance, individual condition, family limitations. The Lord does not dishonour the human intellect or dismiss from his service the human reason; he says, you are responsible beings, you have intelligence, you can saturate your souls in prayer, you can come to the consideration of every subject in a reverential spirit: according to your faith, so ye shall be judged. Many persons have thought that the Apostle was talking about the Sabbath day, and consequently they had opened all their museums and all their picture-galleries, and run all the omnibuses they could lay their hands upon, on the strength of the fifth and sixth verses. No man would be more surprised at that interpretation than the Apostle Paul himself would be. The Apostle had a way of taking some things for granted which ought never to be disputed. The Apostle often assumed that he was writing to common-sense men. If it had

occurred to that ardent and dazzling mind that there were fools who thought a commandment could be trifled with, he would have started and conducted his argument accordingly. He comes amongst the inventions of the Church, its calendared feast days and fast days and new moons and observances, and he says, I am not going to interfere with these things in any arrogant spirit: really, much must be left to individual reason and individual conscience: if a fast day will do you good, have it; if you can do without fasting, continue in your usual course of life: only let there be no bickering, disputing, fault-finding, censoriousness: we are neither saved nor lost by our fast days. All reason is on the side of the Apostle, and all wisdom confirms the wisdom of his admonitions. There are no such days of dissipation in any country as the days of fasting. Men are never so drunk as on the fasting days. There is a time-bill for fast days, and that is generally about the middle of the day when everybody can see you, but as the sun goes down, and the curtains are drawn, and the family lights are set ablaze, then say if it were not well that these beasts fasted before they began that tumult at the trough. "When thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret."

Note how wondrously the Apostle always comes from the discussion of little disputable questions and fortifies himself by great principles:—"For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living." That is Pauline. Even when you bring this mighty mind to the consideration and adjustment of casuistical detail, at the very first opening he lifts his pinions and flies into broad heavens. If men had greater principles they would have less difficulty in detail. If we were sounder in heart we should have fewer difficulties in the head. If our spirit were really baptised into the Spirit of Christ we should know a thousand things without learning them. We need not be drilled into fast days and feast days, and little arrangements and small disciplines

and stipulations with ourselves which only show our feebleness : we should know what to do, by the inspired spirit, the refined and sensitive soul, that knows God afar off, and that feels the law, and therefore need not have it written.

The Apostle must, however, come back to reason with men who are frail of mind and uncertain in spirit ; so he says, "But why dost thou judge thy brother ? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother ?" See the brother, not the sinner ; see the brother, not the wanderer ; see the man, rather than the criminal. The tendency of our minds, being immature, imperfect, unfurnished as to the higher qualities of soul, is to look upon circumstances, external conditions. The magistrate is in infinite haste to seize the criminal ; perhaps it is well he should be so : the Lord, the Christ of God, the Saviour of the world, does not see the criminal ; he sees the man, the woman, the child, the image of God,—for who has eyes like Christ, who can see through the shell into the kernel, who can penetrate the environment and see the living soul ?

What then are we to do ? Paul answers—"Let us not therefore judge one another any more : but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way." You do a great many things for the baby. That baby is the master of the household, in a certain sense and for a limited time ; but if he remain a baby more than five or ten years you have a right to chastise him and tell him that his babyhood has ceased. So we cannot have this weak brother amongst us over long ; he must be getting better by the prayer, the thought, the exhortation, and the example of those amongst whom he is living. If he continue to whine much longer he must be put in a room by himself, that he may admire his own shadow. Still, the Apostle will be patient if he can. He says there are some things which may be done with a good conscience, and may not be done with a good conscience. There are some amusements which you might enjoy, and yet if they make a man who is weaker than you are really soul-sorrowful ; well, think of it : will it not be better to deny yourselves than to mortally offend that poor cripple ? To that principle there is no answer. It is the



principle of the Cross, it is the principle of self-sacrifice, it is the Divine principle of self-denial. If any man should say, The reason why I abstain from meat or vegetables or wine is that I am trying to help some other man to be a better man than he is,—to that argument there is no reply; it is beneficent, it is grand, it is Divine. The Apostle Paul puts the whole case with inspired vividness and liberality. A thing may be good in itself, but another man is hurt by certain uses of it; then consider the man rather than consider yourself, and for his sake refrain from doing much which to yourselves would be perfectly innocent.

“Let not then your good be evil spoken of: for the kingdom of God is not meat and drink.” The kingdom of God has nothing to do with externals. The kingdom of God is not measured by what a man abstains from, or what a man partakes of, or what a man’s opinion is about casuistical questions: the kingdom of God is, like God himself, intensely, ineffably, infinitely spiritual.

“For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure: but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.” Yet we must not pamper the weak man too much, or he will become weaker. We may touch even the vanity of weakness and make it intolerable, so that a man only needs to have a prejudice, when he knows that all the good men of the Church will acknowledge his prejudice and do as he wants them to do, while he is nursing this foolish prejudice in his foolish heart. Surely there must be some public aspect of this deference which is perfectly consistent with the larger liberty which men may enjoy in the absence of the weak man. There are some things you would not say before your child, yet you would not hesitate to say them when the child was absent; there are certain things you would never dream of doing in the nursery, but you would not hesitate to do them in the more public rooms of the house. There are certain things you would never allow the weak man to know that you even thought of. He has no right to be your master, to be the critic of the whole range of your life; and you have no need to call him in and say, Weak man, I want thee: I



am thinking of a certain course of conduct, I am organising a policy of life: come and tell me what thou thinkest of it. Certainly not. It would be monstrous, irrational, intolerable. And yet the great principle of the Apostle remains the same—royal, far-seeing in sagacity, all-saving in beneficence; the sum total of the meaning being this—If by any means you can help a weak man to become a strong man do it: but if you are wasting your life, and the man becomes no stronger, then consider what is best to be done.

“Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God.” This is the law of sacred privacy. Here is the sanctuary within which great liberty may be enjoyed. Hast thou faith? Talk it out with God; let God be the companion of all thy indulgences, and they will be all right; always have God in the sanctuary of thy confidence, and say to him, Lord, I can do this in thy presence; I could not do it in the presence of my weak brother. Even along this line of private and sacred liberty men must exercise sanctified reason. This applies to matters theological, though the Apostle did not intend such matters to be thought of in this connection. Hast thou a doubt? Have it to thyself. We do not want any man to stand in the Christian pulpit and tell us what he doubts about: we want him to tell us what he believes, and what he wants us to believe, and what he lives upon, from what fount he draws his immortality. Hast thou faith—the larger faith, the faith that would be called heterodoxy by those whose ignorance enables them to be fluent? Have that larger faith to thyself before God. Dost thou see a new era coming for the Church? Do not name it yet, because many persons would not understand it. Dost thou see a larger inspiration, a nobler brotherhood, a sublimer millennium? Keep that faith to thyself before God: do not be wantonly defiant, do not trample down boundaries and limitations ruthlessly, but know that as sure as thy thought is true it will come to pass, yea, it will come quietly, quietly like the dawn: men will not know that the light has come until they see it on the mountain tops hastening down to the green valleys. Who ever heard the wheel of the sun grinding its way up into the orient? Who ever heard the blade of grass making a noise as it rose into the air and then filled the ear with

the corn meant for the satisfaction of human hunger? Who ever saw himself grow? What noise do the stars make as they sparkle in the heavens? Many things come noiselessly; especially will this be the case with the kingdom of heaven. It cometh not with observation. Do not bluster about great liberties; they will come little by little, and the time will arrive when all we shall have to do will be to welcome men to the enjoyment of their freedom. This is the sanctuary of Christ's truth. These reconciliations and harmonies have been made possible by the Cross. The Apostle never ceases even in this reasoning to cite the example of Christ. It is by Christ men have liberty; by Christ men are restrained from the enjoyment of much liberty; by Christ men are enabled not to condemn the weak; by Christ the weak are restrained from criticising the strong; by Christ a man is taught what to eat, what to drink, what to take, what to let alone. If the Spirit of Christ be in a man, he will no longer have difficulties about the practical conduct of life; he will know and be persuaded, in the language of the Apostle, what to do, and how to do it, and he will do everything, great and small, in the presence of the all-judging Christ.

## PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, thou has set us amidst great wonders; this moment a thousand men are dying, this moment a thousand men are being born into the world; there is a continual outgoing and incoming, and the Lord is Keeper of all. Yonder is the wedding feast, and here is the funeral ceremony; here there is great sorrow, and yonder there is naught but joy, loud, pure, dominant. We live in this world, so intermixed, so self-contradictory; thou hast put us here to be educated, chastened, ennobled. Watch over all the ministries of thine own creation, and adapt them to the fulfilling of thy purposes of love. May we be large hearted, tender in feeling, accessible to every honest petition of need and pain; may we answer the petitions of weakness in all the fulness of our strength. We bless thee for health and reason, for continued faculty, for force of character; we thank thee also for vows that are courageously borne, burdens that are bravely carried; we thank thee for all the ministry of education continually appealing to our lives. Let the sick-chamber draw thee into its sadness, O thou Healer of men. Hear the song of those who have great gladness, and who wish to praise thee as they had never praised thee before. Lead the blind by a way that they know not; show us the worthlessness of all men's inventions if they be not founded in the uprightness of God. Pity the little earth with continual tears; it is still thine; vagrant, it is still of the household of the stars; thou hast not set thy foot upon it and extinguished it, therefore the continuance of thy patience is itself an assurance that thou wilt bring all this ministry of sin and heartache and weariness to a blessed consummation. The Lord reigneth; we will abide in the tabernacle of the Almighty, and hide ourselves under the wings of his strength. The Lord help poor lives to struggle a day or two longer, and say unto them that by thy grace on the third day they shall be perfected. Amen.

## Romans xiv. 12.

"Every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

## INDIVIDUALISM.

NOT, we shall give account of ourselves as congregations, councils, committees, boards of direction, organisations; but, as individual souls. We must be very careful, therefore, how we deal lightly or loosely with the doctrine and practice of individualism. Many men would be only too glad to pluralise

themselves, and leave the responsibility with the other people. That is the danger of all combinations. A man who is really a man, and who is perfectly honest when trading with you face to face and alone, is not always so honest when he becomes one of a number. His individuality is multiplied, yet divided; it is increased, yet lessened: he is timid, he is not intellectually equal to the occasion he is not a debater, he has no gift of expression or criticism, and therefore he may allow things to be done which he would never think of doing in his own personal and private capacity and business. It is desirable to make this doctrine of individualism very clear, because to-day it has no favour in certain quarters. It is sneered at, it is frowned upon, it is altogether unpopular. One wonders why. Such unpopularity has no vindication that I can find in the Bible; and that which is without vindication in the Bible is to me always suspicious. On the contrary, I find in the Bible the doctrine of individualism taught in the clearest and directest terms—"Every one of us shall give account of himself to God." That is the consummation of the doctrine; that could not come in at the end if it had not come in at the beginning; this is the ripening or maturing of all that has gone before. This is a revelation of the plan upon which the universe is administered in one sentence,—man by man, soul by soul, one by one: thus we die, thus we shall be judged. Therefore there must be in this individualism something that ought to be inquired into, deeply, devoutly, and practically, with a view to its application to our personal daily life.

Notice that there are various individual units. The radical unit is the one man; without that unit you cannot move. Then there is the unit of the family; a family may be spoken of as one—a family, the family, this family. Then there is the unit of the nation; each nation has its own repute or character or credit or history. Then there is the unit of the world. All these are individualities, yet they all go back to the one man, the one soul, the personal judgment, the personal will, the personal conscience. If we are wrong there, we are wrong everywhere. Communism is sanctified and ennobled individualism. You cannot by putting a great number of corrupt individualities together make that which is clean, pure and divine.

Unless, therefore, we get down to the radical unit and make that right and set it to work on proper principles we shall be wrong in the family, in the nation, and in the world. Let us remember the radical unit. Individualism may be abused. What is there that cannot be degraded? If men are condemning the abuses and corruptions of individualism, we of necessity go with them in all their condemnation: but we are not to condemn the instance at the expense of the principle. The doctrine is the same, and must be retained inviolate and applied fearlessly and impartially, though there may be instances, on the one side or the other, apparently confirming or contradicting that principle. We have nothing in the meantime to do with the mere instance; we are engaged now in fixing our thought intently upon the doctrine that, without personal individuality of character, we cannot have anything that is noble and beneficent in the family, in the nation, or in the world.

There is a debased individuality even in religious circles. That is a fault I have to find with some communions and churches. They are almost always of necessity talking about themselves, their own statistics, their own progress, their own funds, their own figure before the world. That is a debased instance of communal or congregational individualism. Then I have also to find fault with men, individual men, who, as the common phrase is, play for their own hand. They do not consider the case which they deal with broadly, in all its relations and issues. They must of necessity consider each himself how he will stand, how he will be totalled up in the schedule. This is not individualism, this is mere selfishism; this is cultivating selfish vanity and aspiration at the expense of all that is holiest in spiritual ambition. There is also a true individuality; in this sense, individualism is the security of co-operation; individualism in this sense is the security of society. Corrupt men can never hold themselves together except for the one chance, the immediate occasion, and transient condition; they will fall foul of one another: individually corrupt, they cannot be socially noble. My contention, therefore, is that individualism, ennobled and sanctified, is the security of society, and that society is impossible without such individualism. Hence we have the

grand doctrine and practice of personal responsibility. There is no transfer of obligation from one man to another. This is a trick we may adopt amongst ourselves ; but in the sight of God the practice will be put down with infinite judgment and rebuke, and will be condemned to everlasting darkness. We say, It was my brother : it was my fellow-minister : it was my co-director : it was my partner in business. But God will not have it so. He will say to us, You ought not to have had any one in your reckoning that could vitiate the process, that could interfere with the responsibility. "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God," and that miserable and detestable partner of yours, who is always interfering with your great schemes, he must be named. You have never named him, you have referred to him as a figure behind the arras ; you must name him, and in his own personality he must be burned in the fire of hell. Thus I contend that individualism may be debased, and thus I further contend that individualism may be ennobled. I am advocating the ennobled individualism ; and that individualism must of necessity recognise the individual rights of other men. If you find an individualism that denies rights to other men, that individualism is foul, corrupt, debased ; it is not the individualism we are seeking to promote. I repeat that by the very necessity of the case when the individual is right he must recognise the rights of other men. What have we then ? This recognition is the very secret of co-operation ; this recognition keeps the waters of life sweet and pure. I must give what I claim. Do I claim the right of private judgment ? I must concede it. Do I claim to act in the fear and sight of God in all matters concerning myself ? I must allow that other men are as honest and high-minded as I claim to be.

What have we, then, in this development and application of individualism ? Why, we have the true communism, the real, healthy, permanent brotherhood. Any other combination is a sham, and must end in failure. Whatever is not based upon individual conviction and regulated by individual conscience is a truce, a compromise, an expedient for the time being, a process of giving and taking that may end to the detriment of moral integrity. Thus we set up in the sight and fear of God a real,



generous, noble, sanctified individualism. And thus, and thus only, can we come to fraternity. The mischief is that so many persons imagine we cannot have unity unless we have uniformity. That is the vicious fallacy that enfeebles and debases so much of political and ecclesiastical reasoning. Individuality knows nothing about uniformity. Yet individuality claims to grow up into the highest unity. Life is multifold. Life is not a brick-built wall; life is a garden, a forest, a landscape; the landscape may be one, though every field is different in geometric form and every tree is distinct from every other tree on all the green undulation. When will men recognise the difference between unity and uniformity? Some persons cannot be persuaded that we are making any progress until we all walk alike, and until we are all practically of the same stature, and until we are almost indistinguishable the one from the other. I have never known that to be the Divine law. The Scripture gives no sanction to any such interpretation of human nature and human fellowship. Let every man be himself. The Lord has given to one man five talents, to another two, and to another one; and nowhere does he say, Total them up into eight, divide the eight by three, and I will take an account of you for the integer and the fraction. He calls each man to account for his five talents, for his two talents, for his one talent. There is individuality, and yet there might have been unity in co-operation, in the one cheering the other, helping and appreciating the other. Lay down the fundamental doctrine that uniformity is man's trick: unity is God's purpose.

This idea of uniformity has ruined some sections of the Church. Some sections of the Church are nothing apart from their distinctiveness. Not where they are like others, but where they are unlike or individual their genius and their power begin. This uniformising has led to a great decadence in the power of the Christian pulpit. Men will have all preachers alike; they will have all sermons cast in one mould; they will have all begin at the same place, pass through the same process, end in the same consummation. That is not the Divine plan. I would have every minister be himself. There is no one man who is all other men. No minister is the ministry. Where then do

we find unity? We find it in the fact and in the claim, that the ministry of Christ is one. We are not individual preachers only. Each preacher represents what he can represent of what he has known, felt, tasted, and handled of the word of life. We must hear all the ministers before we hear the ministry. We are not all called upon to do the same work. The conception that every individual section in the Christian Church must go and do the same work in the same place is the ruin of co-operation, as well as of individuality. Suppose there are twenty sects in Christendom: are all these twenty sects to go down to one village in order to convert it or evangelise it? Nothing of the kind. I ask, what sect is there already? If it is an honest, true-hearted, hard-working sect, I will keep away. It may be my sect or it may be some other sect, but if the work is being done I am doing it, though I am not there, if I be really in sympathy with all Christian development and all Christian progress. I will go further and say, that nineteen of the sects must keep away from ground that is preoccupied, and they must send down to the men who have preoccupied it all the money they want. Have the Methodists got possession of that village? If so, send them what funds they need from the Congregationalists, from the Presbyterians, from the Baptists. We are nowhere commanded to go down twenty strong and divide a little population by our ecclesiastical contentions and differences. I would go further still: I would look around and examine whether, within my own communion, there are men who can do a certain kind of work. If I can find the men, I ought to support them in the first instance; but if I cannot find the men that are needed, within the boundaries of my own communion, I must look abroad and see who is doing the work that requires to be done, and though he may not fight under my particular ecclesiastical banner, he is fighting under the colours of the Cross, and must be sustained and supported by all Christian communions. Personally, I could not do a certain kind of work. It is something for a man to know the limitation of his faculty and of his responsibility. Other men can do it a thousand times better than I can do it. Have I therefore to go down and say, "I must do this particular work, whoever else is trying to do it or not trying to do it," when I know I cannot do it? I will never follow so narrow and so base

a policy. I believe the Salvation Army, for example, belongs to all the churches. In the fact that it belongs to none in particular, I find the fact that it belongs to all in general. If we are earnest Christian souls, each working where he can, and where he can do so best, we are part of the Salvation Army, and we ought to send our prayers and our gifts after it. We may be able to give money and not to give counsel; let us do what we can do, and leave undone what God never meant us to attempt. On the other hand, I believe that there is a work that the Salvation Army cannot do, that other men can do much better, a work of exposition and teaching and training and consolidating; let these men know their gift and calling of God, and carry out the Divine purpose conscientiously. Here we have individuality, and here we have community and co-operation; here we have unity, and, blessed be God, here we have nothing of uniformity. Understand that human nature is multiplex, many-sided, doubled and re-doubled with innumerable complications; understand that that fact necessitates a multifold ministry; some can do one thing and some can do another: let each do what he can do, or what it as a congregation or organisation can do, and God will bless us all.

When we get rid of this notion of organisation and uniformity, we shall be liberated, and shall go on our way rejoicing. If the Lord has made any two hundred or two thousand men all of the same size and all of the same pattern, and so alike that they do not know themselves and are always mistaking themselves for other people, then by all means let them unite and make what they can of themselves; I have never seen them, and never heard of them. Looking abroad upon society, and studying human nature in practical instances, I find that God seems to have taken a delight (with reverence be it spoken) in differentiating man from man, in giving each man a personality of his own; and he seems to say to us through great instincts and sympathies, Now you are very different, yet you may all be one; I mean you to be united; find the common measure, find the uniting line; and whilst retaining all your individuality enter into one another's feelings and sympathies and activities, and whilst communising yourselves never forget your individuality.

Hear this great voice sounding through all the corridors of history—"Every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

It will be something if I have drawn your minds with any steadiness to the contemplation of the fact, that individualism may be abused, and if I can enforce upon your judgment and conscience the fact that I am not supporting an abused individualism, but an individualism that means personal thinking, personal conscience, personal service, personal obedience: and it will be still something more if I have begun to suggest to opening minds the great fact, that uniformity is a false standard of judgment, and that only by bringing all the individualities together do we get the right conception of the Church. This is my explanation or philosophy of denominationalism. Some men could not be Quakers. That is a melancholy fact, perhaps, but it is a fact in history. And the Quakers are beginning to find that they themselves can no longer be themselves, but must hobnob with the Philistines on the other side of the wall; they are becoming gay and frivolous, and curiously and inexplicably ecclesiastical. All men could not be Congregationalists, nor could all men be Presbyterians, or Episcopalians. I believe in all sects that are honest: grace, mercy, and peace be to them, yea, to all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. I do not deny the unity of the human race because no two men are alike; I do not deny society because every man has a way of thinking peculiar to himself. If any one communion gets up and says, "I can do all that is wanting to be done of a religious nature in this world," I have no confidence in it; that communion has not recognised the fundamental fact of the difference between man and man, temperament and temperament, education and education, environment and environment. If my own sect should arise and say, I am sent of God to be the one Church of the world, I should leave it. It is a foolish and an impious claim. I want to hear each sect say, I have a work to do, my Lord sent me to do this particular kind of work; let me work side by side with you, if you please, and you will be doing your kind of work, I will be doing my kind of work, and we all belong to the one Master; and because we belong to the one Cross we are really one, though our methods of working and our progress and our

policies are different in colour and in words. Some men seem to think that each Church must stand up and say, there is no other Church; as if Congregationalism must be put down because it cannot do all the religious work required by the world; and as if Anglicanism should be put down on the same ground. Nothing of the kind. Each has its sphere, each has its function; let each recognise this fact, and in that recognition there will be the beginning of union and the guarantee of harmony. There is an individualism that seeks its life and loses it; there is also an individualism that loses its life and finds it. In the Church I would make room for everybody. Have you a tongue? have you a prophecy? have you a psalm? There are diversities of administration, but the same spirit; there are manifold gifts, but the same Divine use of them: as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office, yet all the members constitute the one body, so we, being many in Christ, constitute the whole Church of Christ. The Papists are in it, and the Quakers are in it, and all honest and godly souls are in it; and even the unclassified portion of men may be in it, without knowing it. "Other sheep," said the great Shepherd, "other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also must I bring." "Them also"—wondrous "also." He will not rest until all who are even groping after him have felt his hand and seen his face.

Let us have no patched-up compromises one with another. The man who has one talent is as much the servant of God as the man who has five; he must give an account of his one talent. The man who can work best in one pulpit and in one church is as much a servant of God as the evangelist who flies from continent to continent, and makes all the world his sphere of usefulness. The Sunday-school teacher who can only speak to two scholars at a time, because three would make too much of a public meeting, is as much a teacher of Christ's kingdom, in earnest and if enlightened, as if he could address ten thousand men in thunder-tones. Why will we not recognise these differences, and praise them not as mere differences; not construe them into hostilities, but regard them as individualities which total up into the great unity? The universe is one; etymologically,



its very name signifies oneness, yet how wondrous in difference ; what light and shade, what contrast of colour, what mingling and intermingling of voices, sounds, tones ; what mountains and rivers, what hills and dales, what mystery of coming and going, what eternal processions and revolutions ! Shall the universe break itself up into parts and say that some other part does not belong to the universe ? Nay, verily : so must not we break ourselves up into a debased individualism : neither must we give up our individuality, and say, Other men shall think for us. If you examine this matter still further in the light of the history of religious organisations, you will find individuality everywhere. Even on a committee there is a man who determines the whole thing for you. He is not necessarily the greatest mind on the committee, but he is a capable man, he has had most opportunity of thinking about the business, forecasting it and arranging it, and if he does not always have his way he thinks himself hardly and cruelly used ; and as nobody wants to use any other body cruelly he gets his way, and then denounces the idea of individualism ! He will have none of it ; not knowing that he is himself the most debased individuality in the organisation which he rules. There may be great show of freedom where there is really no liberty. A man may so nationalise himself as to include everybody, and yet when an individual comes to preach for me he may tap him on the head, and say, "Not to-day, sir !" And this is the man who is so magnificently nationalised that he knows nothing about your little sectarian limitations. Beware ! In some breadths there is nothing but vacancy. Beware ! sometimes intensity means reality of soul and conviction of purpose. However much we may pine for uniformity even, never forget that every one of us shall give account of himself, and of nobody else, to God. How can I prepare for that judgment ? Only by being one with my Lord, who recognised all differences and reconciled all individualities ; and who is drawing up unto himself all men that may find the fulness of the meaning of their manhood in his Deity. So we come back to the Cross ; we always end on Calvary ; to end elsewhere would be to be lost in the desert : to end here is to end in peace and gladness.



## PRAYER.

**ALMIGHTY God**, we bless thee for the healing Christ. We all need healing; we are wounds and bruises in thy sight: Lord, touch us, heal us, make us strong. Thou art the giver of strength, thou art the fountain of power; we come to thee for renewal of energy; because thy compassions fail not we are made young again every morning. Every good gift and every perfect gift are thine, and thine only; we have nothing that we have not received: how then shall we return thanks unto God, who daily loadeth us with benefits? He healeth all our diseases, he makes us strong by the ministry of his love. We thank thee for all men who so far imitate the Saviour as to seek the healing of others; wherein they know not what they do they give thanks unto God; wherein they deny the very Master they serve, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge; open their eyes that they may see, and show them that to heal is to pray, to do good is to love, to seek the higher benefits for men is to act in the spirit of the Saviour. We bless thee for all good institutions, all healing ministries, all hallowed forces and agencies, and we pray that they may be sanctified to the accomplishment of their holy purpose. The Lord cause the spirit of pity to dwell amongst us. If we pity one another we shall come to love God; if we love God we cannot help pitying one another: he who loveth God loveth his neighbour also; if he say he love God and do not love his neighbour, thou hast made him a liar, and thou hast accounted him as an offence in thy sanctuary. Help us therefore to know the right relations of things and to act lovingly and trustfully, knowing that the Lord is accomplishing an immeasurable and beneficent purpose in all the darkness and discipline and chastening of life. Good Lord, hear us for the sick, the troubled, and for those who are appointed to die. Are we not all so appointed? Yet some must die to-day, some to-morrow, and their death so sudden will bring great clouds upon the house. The Lord help such to believe that all is ordered, that there is an appointed time to man upon the earth, that not to know that appointed time is one of the blessings thou dost give unto thy children. Thus let the Lord hear us, and fill all heaven with a cloud that shall break in blessings upon our life. Amen.

## Romans xiv. 16, 17.

“Let not then your good be evil spoken of: for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking [R.V.]; but righteousness, and peace [*lit.*, peaceableness], and joy in the Holy Ghost.”

**PROPORTIONATE CHARACTER.**

**H**ERE we have an exhortation, and here, secondly, we have a reason for it. "Let not then your good be evil spoken of,"—do not fritter yourselves away; do not let the one thing that is good about you be mistaken or discredited, because of several little things in you that are unworthy of your profession and status in Christ. There is something good in you, take care if it; you are not without quality, do not debase it; be jealous about yourselves, about your character, about its proportion, about its perspective, about all its relations and energies. It is not enough to be good; we may be good, and yet spoil the good. Men thus injure themselves, and no man can injure himself alone: who injures himself injures Christ, crucifies the Son of God afresh, misrepresents the Divine kingdom. It is not enough to say that, with all his eccentricity and peculiarity, he is at the heart of him a good man. It is always a pity when a man so conducts himself that he has to be explained and apologised for in that way, as who should say, After taking off a hundred wrappings you will come to something that is really not inferior, something that is indeed more or less excellent. That is a poor representation of the Divine kingdom; that is a miserable way of representing the living, loving, pure, beautiful Christ, that he has to be dug out of the grave of our eccentricities and follies.

Let not then your good be discredited. Distinguish between the essential and the incidental. Some people seem to be quite unable to accomplish that little arrangement. Nothing is important to them, because all things are equally important. Where we see nothing but mountains there seem to be no mountains. We may run even great things into monotony and wearisomeness. The Apostle Paul says, Do make a distinction between one thing and another. God has not painted the universe black and white; observe the fine gradation of shade and colour and mystery of light that there is about everything that God has done. Study proportion. Some men have no idea of the term proportion as applied to Christ's character. They do one thing as intensely as another. That may not be earnestness; it may be

mere exaggeration or miscalculation. Why waste yourselves on littles, on frivolities, or trivialities, or mechanisms? Why not get at the root and heart of things? In this way only, by going to the core, can you correctly comprehend God's kingdom and Christ's Cross, and represent the same to men beautifully and persuasively.

Look at the consequences of your being wanting in proportion. Your good will be evil spoken of. Even your greatest beliefs will go for less than they are really worth. People will fasten upon your pedantries, and ritualisms, and ceremonies, and mechanisms, and they will roughly say, What can you expect from people who pay so much attention to pin-points, to trifles? How can they be really great or truly good? If where we really do understand them they are trivial, frivolous, pedantic; if we could understand them still more thoroughly in their souls, we should find that they were true to their own littleness all through and through. Your prayers will be despised; all your best actions will be discounted. Why do you not pay attention to proportion? Why fight about days, and feasts, and fasts, and observances, as if they had anything to do with the kingdom of God? Within their own little limits they may have their significance and their importance, but, when viewed in relation to God's uppermost thought and purpose in the constitution and destiny of the universe, they are comparatively unworthy of attention. The people who hinder the kingdom of God are the people who do not understand it and yet pretend to do so. They are full of what they call habits; they are well-informed in the matter of religious stipulations and maxims; their life is all scheduled out from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same; they live pedantically, puristically, mechanically: but their whole life can be represented adequately on a printed schedule. The Apostle tears down all your little schedules, and says, The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, getting up at such an hour in the morning, visiting brotherhoods through a part of the day, going out in the evening to see friends and neighbours; that is not the kingdom of God: down with your schedules and your mechanisms! the kingdom of God is righteousness, peaceableness, joy in the Holy Ghost the highest eating and

drinking, divinest festival ; men at this feast are drunk with the Spirit of God.

That is the exhortation.—“Let not your good be evil spoken of.” What is the reason ? The reason is given in the seventeenth verse :—“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” How penetrating, how profound ! We are in the grasp of a great reasoner. Paul always vindicates himself as a majestic philosopher. No matter what the subject is, he discusses it with the ease of mastery. This man Paul has got a sound, thorough grip of his subject. He cannot fail. He knows the question through and through ; you can suggest nothing to him. He is full of suggestion, apology, exposition, and defence. How good it is to feel one’s soul in the keeping of a strong man ! That is what we want at home, in the sick-chamber. There are some persons so healthy that they make others healthy as they draw near, that is to say, they bring a kind of contagion of health with them. Theirs is not that rude boisterous health which is self-trusting, but that complete health of soul and of body which breathes itself into those who are weak and ailing, and in great pain ; they say of such visitors, They bring with them morning and youth and summer ; they are not overpowering, they are inspiring. It is precisely so we feel towards the Apostle Paul when he preaches, teaches, or expounds. He always seems to be so full of his subject, and to have such grip and mastery of it, that he can make us partakers of his riches if we be right-hearted towards him and towards his subject. Paul had a kingdom, where has that kingdom gone to ? Who are these that nibble and mumble and hesitate and apologise in God’s pulpit ? Who sent them ? We have forgotten that God has a kingdom upon the earth, a great conception of rule and sovereignty and majesty ; a great scheme of spiritual law and impulse, and incessant and ever-increasing inspiration. The Church is almost anything but a kingdom ; in some respects it is about the poorest mendicant that goes about cap in hand soliciting broken bread that it may keep its life within it. The Church has given up the idea of domination—not outward, nominal, formal domination, but the domination which comes of spiritual health and spiritual

treasure, and spiritual sympathy. The voice that should make itself heard through all the thunder and tempest and wrath of the ages should be the still, small voice, so still because so majestic, and small because so all-sufficient. Its whisper is more than all other thunder. Let us see if we do not degrade the idea of the kingdom.

What is Paul's conception? It is not eating and drinking; it is not socialism, it is not routine, it is not conviviality. The Church is not an exchange of visits in which men conceal their deepest conviction and suppress their holiest emotions. The Church is not a programme, it is a revelation. We are great in programmes; we can draw out schedules a week long, and we can so draw them out that on the eighth day we forget that we ever conceived them. The Church is in danger of becoming a programme, a series of little things to be done, a succession of amusements, a series of entertainments, a concatenation of interchanges, so that we are here to-day, and there to-morrow: and that we call the brotherhood. Is there anything wrong in these things? Not necessarily; they may be good; but they may also be set out of right perspective and proportion, they may become so exaggerated as really to inflict indignity upon the idea of the Divine kingdom. The men who have hurt the Church a good deal are men who have had some rude or cultured skill in getting up plans and schemes and entertainments. They have not been mischievous in their purpose; on the other hand they have been zealous for what they believed to be the Christian life: but if they have been devoting themselves to the wrong things, and disturbing God's proportion as to the set and significance of his kingdom, then they have unwittingly been doing mischief, and the mischief is not the less that it has been unwittingly done. I can hardly conceive anything less like the Acts of the Apostles than a correct and literal transcript of what many Churches are doing this very day. I am willing to risk the issue upon parallel columns; in the one column shall stand the Acts of the Apostles, and in the other column shall stand the programmes and entertainments and observances of to-day: then tell me, thou blind fool, which is apostolic and which is modern Christianity. If I do want to match the Acts of the Apostles I



can do so, but then I shall have to bring in the chronicles of our missionary societies, what we are doing amongst the heathen, and the chronicles of our home missionary societies, what we are doing amongst the home heathen and the home poor. But I do not know that I could honestly go to the ordinary Church life of to-day, especially where it is most respectable, if I really wanted to balance in some humble degree the heroic, the tragic, the appalling record of apostolic life.

What then is the kingdom of God? It is "righteousness." Who wrote that word so often as Paul wrote it? He must surely sometimes have abbreviated it if he wrote much with his own hand, because he was so familiar with it, and used it so frequently that some symbol alone would indicate his meaning. Paul would have no compromises about anything; he would have it settled squarely and rightly; if it was of the nature of compromise, he would not give up the element of right; if he were going to abstain from eating and drinking, he would say, I have a right both to eat and drink, but if you are so constituted that you will be injured by my eating and drinking, then I will overrule that right by a still larger right—the right of charity, the right of self-sacrifice. Still, amid all concessions, and arrangements about Sabbath days, and eating flesh, and drinking wine, Paul would insist upon having the line of right set up, and he would have every concession understood to be a concession and not an acknowledgment of his being wrong, or of the claimants being wise above the revelation which he had received from God. Are social habits then to be neglected? Nay: social habits are to be cultivated, but they are first to be rightly originated. If your habit is a mechanical arrangement, it will go down under pressure: if your habits express your righteousness, peaceableness, and joy in the Holy Ghost, then they are no longer mechanical habits, they express that which is within you of Divine idea, Divine thought, and Divine fire. Habits ought to be incarnations. If a man cannot begin at any point but the point of habit, we must accommodate his weakness; he must, however, be trained to see that the kingdom of God is not external, something to be gazed upon, and measured as if it were a figure in geometry. Little by little some men may have to



be trained to see that the whole idea of the Divine kingdom is internal, spiritual, metaphysical, and that even a habit, which seems to be a thing of the hand, goes right back into eternity; it finds in God its origin, its motive, its impulse, and its sanctification. Thus many of our mere habits would have to be torn down and to be publicly discredited. It is easier to cultivate a habit than to enter into the mystery of the life of God. It is easier to go to church than to be in it. Many a man is in the sanctuary, who is a thousand miles away from it at the time of his bodily presence there. Habits are either good or bad, but all depends not so much upon themselves as upon their motive.

Out of all this line of reasoning there will come a great evangelistic and social policy. Now we are prepared for our work. The Apostle has exhorted—"Let not then your good be evil spoken of"; he has told us that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink," or eating and drinking; "but righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost"; if this be so, see what a practical policy comes out of the exhortation and the reason on which it is founded. Here is our missionary policy. We go amongst the heathen to reveal an invisible kingdom. That will take a long time; in proportion to the intensity of the spirituality of the kingdom will time be required to reveal it. They are the wise missionaries who do not begin by upsetting the whole scheme of life in which they find the heathen, but who say, Let us get a right idea into the mind first; as to habits that are grotesque and ludicrous, we must let them go on for a while; if we began our reform at these external points we might do more harm than good; let us therefore live with the people; for a considerable time there need not even be much preaching, let us breathe out our souls in this heathen atmosphere. Let us so act that the heathen will begin to wonder about us; we shall be to them mysteries, enigmas, great wonders: they will not know that we have bread to eat that the world knoweth not of, and yet they will by-and-by begin to suspect this hoarded bread, then they will ask us questions; when an opportunity comes we will drop a word, give a hint, offer a service: but instead of rudely attacking the whole system of habit in the heathen world, let us begin at a comparatively remoter point,

yea, a very remote point, and come down gradually upon the whole sphere of life; let our missionary success be an atmosphere, and let it mean a spiritual ministry and influence. It could easily be conceived that many a man would get himself killed by beginning at the wrong end of missionary work. Many a man has been doing more harm than good through not knowing it, through not beginning at the right point. What wisdom we require! We need to be taught everything we do, and we need to say, Father, I will not lift a hand until I am sure I must lift it, nor will I cross the threshold until thou dost send a messenger to go before my face. Thus we need Divine skill, Divine wisdom, as well as Divine sympathy and Divine support. Here we have the great law of action amongst our own home population. If you are going down into what you call the lowest places of your social life with a sort of aggressive, rude, and over-powering reform, you may do more harm than good in the first instance; or you may go down otherwise, with a larger conception of God's kingdom and God's purpose. At first sight you may appear to be doing nothing, but every life is doing something; there cannot breathe an honest healthy soul anywhere without doing good. Sometimes we do more good by wisely-calculated abstention than by that onrush and overpowering energy which often defeats its own purpose. What is it that you are going to reveal to the people? Is it mere eating and drinking? Then take your tables, and your vessels, and all your appurtenances and appointments. But is it a Divine kingdom, a spiritual idea, a newness of soul; are you going to make new habits, or new souls, new workers? you will operate accordingly. You can only embody your own conception: if you have a poor and low conception, you will incarnate it; if you have a lofty, pure, and true conception, you may require more space and more time to work in than others require; but in the long run he who is most spiritual will be most useful.

Here is also a law which will operate in your own family. There are many fathers who ought to be turned out of their own households. I have known fathers who were so impiously pious that they have ruined the lives of their own children by their purisms, pedantic arrangements, mechanical stipulations about

rising, and sleeping, and eating, and going out, and coming in ;—things that in themselves have a definite importance, but being pressed out of their proper proportion, being exaggerated, they become mischievous. If this were an argument upon paper one man might vex another by cross-examination, and hinder him by mere verbiage ; but when it is a question of Christian life, actual, positive, accessible experience, then we must depend upon facts, not upon any man's surmisings and speculations. I have known families in which no honest soul could live. The whole household was a set of programmes and plans and stipulations, all originating with one foolish brain, and all controlled by one tyrannous but feeble hand. We must have a wise home policy, if we are to train the children aright. "Let not your good be spoken evil of." What do your children do when they know that you are little miserable tyrants, mere purists, and not great apostles of the kingdom ? This—sneer at your prayers, and when you are pouring out your family supplication they are looking at each other over the shoulder and making grimaces at their foolish father. "Let not then your good be evil spoken of." It is right for you to read the Divine Word, and to offer holy prayer in the family ; but if you have been living such a trivial and mechanical life, and if you have been bringing your children into such literal bondage, you cannot expect them to pray ; they do not want to pray, and they do not want to go with you to church ; your being in church with them destroys the church idea. What then are we to have ? Liberty run to seed, mere licentiousness ? Nothing of the kind ; no wise man could ask such a question or make such a suggestion : what we want is proportion. Children, we would reveal (the father should say) a kingdom of right and peace and joy ; not temporary right, not superficial peace, not transient gladness : I tell you, boys and girls, children of mine, we want to reveal a kingdom that is solid, grand, useful, beautiful, that rises all the way up from the rock of righteousness into the gladness of heaven's own rapture and music. Get that idea into the family life, or into the social life on a larger scale, and all the habits will come, all the rest will fall into its right place. If you have exceptional instances you must treat them exceptionally ; I am now speaking upon the broad general ground-plan of life, and I insist that many

men in the family are working mischief, who think they are working good, and are paying more attention to discipline than to inspiration.

Here then is the kingdom with which we are associated. This kingdom cannot be successfully assailed. The kingdom of programmes, and schedules, and ecclesiasticisms, and ritualism, can be assaulted, wounded, shattered : but this kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, stands beyond the storm of war, and comes down below it, touching all that is highest in heaven, and all that is deepest in the tragedy of human experience. This is the kingdom we must defend. The critic cannot get at it: the fool cannot understand it: the pedant cannot measure it. If we drag it down to mere documents and dates and signatures, then it is no longer a kingdom, it is an affidavit, it is something for magisterial inquiry. Documents and dates and signatures have their importance, no wise man will doubt that for a moment; but the book is not God's book because it is dated and signed; it is God's book because it has in it a kingdom that can be found nowhere else, speciality of experience and force which cannot be discovered in all the literature of the world. This is a question of experience, this is a question of sublime experience; and the Apostle tells us for our joy that if we take the right view and operate on the right policy, this sublime experience will become a social conquest; it shall not only be "acceptable to God," but "approved of men." There is the social issue; that is the final outcome of things. It is not approved of men at first. Men cannot understand the spiritual, they cannot penetrate the invisible; you may easily be too profound for men: but you can live so, you can live on such a scale, and in such a spirit, as to become a mystery to your fellow creatures. You can be so righteous, so generous, so strong, so tender, so useful, always most present when most needed, that at last they will begin to say, Truly this man also is a son of God!

## Romans xv.

### BROTHERLY KINDNESS.

“WE then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak.” If we were under the impression that Christianity is all metaphysics we have been under an impression that is false. There is nothing so practical, so work-a-day-like, as Christianity. It goes into the market-place and into the family, and into all the holes and corners of life, and sees that everything is done according to the spirit of the eternal sanctuary. Orthodoxy does not look in one direction only, it is not a question of metaphysical correctness alone; it is rather a question of good conduct, lofty character, high quality of soul, fine temper, and inexhaustible charity.

“We then that are strong.” How subtle the praise! How skilfully the compliment is introduced: a general plurality, a “We” that looks so simple in grammar, but that is larger than the sky in inclusiveness and meaning. The Apostle Paul could discriminate, but he could also suspend the faculty of criticism, that he might give heart to those who would be easily cast down. He utters this plural “We” as if it included others as well as himself, and others who were in all respects equal to himself, possibly superior to himself; yet here is a common plurality, a great golden cordon, within which anybody may come, that wants to do so with an honest heart. He talks about the weak as if they were a million miles away, and as if at some time, possibly, we might come in contact with them; and if ever that event should transpire, then we should be kind to them, gentle, civil, courteous, and helpful. He regards those to whom he is writing as if they were all equally strong, and as if he were sending them out on a mission to find the weak that they might nurture them into strength. Oh there is a truthful flattery, there is a

subtly blessed eulogy, to be pronounced upon other people in an instructive sense. Sometimes we mean that the people ought to be as good as the compliment. It requires a master to handle such instruments, but when they are skilfully handled they work wonders. A man may be made ashamed of himself sometimes by having a compliment paid to him. He may say I ought to have been that, but I am not: is it possible this man has imagined me to be so good, so generous, so unselfish and so kind? What have I done to deserve this recognition? The man has only seen one glittering point in my character; if he could see the rest he would know that I am as base as I can be. But I must bestir myself; if this is the impression made by anything I have done, I must try to live up to it. Paul was a master teacher, a master builder; he never gave plain, straightforward, and undisguised medicine; he had a thousand little jellies and capsules under which he hid the stuff that would have been bitter in the mouth. Christianity can be courteous, gentle, instructive, eulogistic, without bating jot or tittle of its infinite veracity.

“We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak.” There is nothing unreasonable in that request. That is the law of the household; and the household best represents Paul’s idea of the Christian Church: a “whole family in heaven and earth” is Paul’s conception of the spiritual fraternity. This is not a metaphysical difficulty; it did not need a written Bible to tell us this doctrine; this is the writing on the heart by invisible fingers in invisible ink; but there it is, never to be obliterated. If this doctrine could give way under any pressure, the world would be lost. A doctrine of this kind has saved the world, and has given the world hope of itself. It is easy for certain lines of thought to go in other directions. There is a surgery which talks about your broken limb as a beautiful case, and the doctor says if he can cure you he will make his name and fortune; it is one of the most interesting cases that ever came under his notice. So talks the man about your broken bones. There are those who say, The weak must go to the wall; the wall was built on purpose to receive them; let their brains be dashed out against the stonework; there will always



be a survival of the fittest, and the fittest should eat all the bread, and drink all the wine, and enjoy all the wheat-field and vintage; everything was made for the burly, the big, the rotund, and the radiant, and the full-blooded; and as for little weak, puny, puling cattle, let who will set a foot upon them, and blot them out. Yet these scientific men are not cruel when you come to talk to them one by one: they are only talking from a very high scientific point of view. They never were there, but they talk as if they had always lived nowhere else. It is Christianity that is sympathetic, it is Christ that says, If there is a very little one anywhere about, take care you do not step upon that poor little life: wait; we must not go one step farther until we have gathered up the least of the flock. He shall lead his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs in his bosom; the bruised reed he will not break, the smoking flax he will not quench: "one of the least of these my brethren" is a strain of music that shall be found in the judgment of the eternal throne. We do not want a philosophical religion only: nobody ever understood philosophy or could make any use of it, except in endeavouring to explain it to other people, who would rather not have heard the explanation—people who imagine that they did understand something before it was explained to them, but after it was explained all life became one steady and frowning fog. Christianity is a mother, a nurse, a friend, a watcher that sits up all night, a gentle spirit that does not like tears, and therefore drives them away; a sweet, beautiful, summer-like angel that wants to grow a flower wherever there is room for its little root. Christianity would never despise the weak, therefore by so much Christianity is the true religion.

"... and not to please ourselves." This is the line of discipline. Up to being thought strong we were good; up to paying some little attention to the infirmities of the weak, if they were not too many, we were willing to earn a little Christian reputation; but when the Apostle says, "and not to please ourselves," he breaks every bone in our body, he grinds us to powder, he roasts us before a slow fire, he drives us away with our hypocritical prayers, that we may breathe them into any bottomless pit that may receive such unsacred desires. Not to please myself!

What is life ? Is life worth living ? May I not do both things—may I not help the weak, and still please myself ? But the Apostle says you are not to help the amiable weak, the gentle, grateful weak, but you are to help the bearish weak, the ugly, hideous, impatient, furious, spiteful weak. You would not mind sitting up all night to watch some beautiful child in its fitful slumber : but to sit up all night, and to be scolded all the time, is like sitting up all the nights in one's life at once. Yet this is Christianity ; this is the Cross ; this is Calvary. You do not know your friends until you have come in direct conflict with them. Do not call a man nice, kind, genial, friendly, when the man has had all his own way with you. You know nothing about that man. Disappoint him, vex him, come in direct conflict with his most cherished opinions ; tell him in a friendly and kindly way that he knows nothing about the subject, and ought therefore to keep his mouth shut—then you will see really what your friend is. So with the weak : if we have only been nursing the tender-hearted weak, we know nothing about infirmity. It is kindly, genial, gentle ; but when everything is crossed, and crossed again, and nothing goes square, or straight, or up, or down, but is everywhere tortuous, winding, twisting, and crooked, and impracticable,—it is just along there that we find out how much we can bear, and how much we have in us of the genius of the agony of the Cross. In that high sense there are no Christians. Enough for us, meantime, that we have got so far conquest over the beast that is in us as to want to be Christlike.

“Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.” That is, to building the man up, getting him higher and higher day by day. We must not please the neighbour to his destruction. There is a pleasure that has in it no healthy qualities. There is a way of making work easy. Is there any work at all now ? Certainly not in the old sense. Our fathers' fathers used to work : we make holiday. We have a genius for creating vacations. We are the inventors of labour-saving machinery. To edify a man without seeming to do so is the higher attainment of Christian skill. Let a man feel that you have made a dead set upon him with the view of making him better, and he will fight you ; but so to arrange the environment of the man, and so to act that everything

you say and do contributes to his upbuilding, is a skill a man must pray himself into. You leave the society of some men conscious that you have lost something. Some men come into your house, and when they have gone you say, Where are we? that man seems to have blown upon everybody: he has not said one kind word about any living soul; are there any gentlemen living, any scholars, any Christians, any preachers, any good people at all? There has been a robbery in the house. Other men come into the house, and redecorate it, hang all its walls with beauteous eloquent colour, and fill the soul with new thought, new hope, new life; so that you say, After all there is a touch of heaven in this old rotten earth; there are some flowers down here that must have been transplanted, brought from celestial climes. There you have been upbuilt, strengthened, made larger and stronger, wholly; and the process has been a pleasure to you; it may have been a pleasure you could not define in words, and yet when the process of communion has closed you feel that you have entertained an angel unawares, a soul that has built you up in your most holy faith, and yet has probably not uttered one single theological sentence.

The Apostle cannot long keep himself away from Christ. He comes to that sweet name in the next sentence—"For even Christ pleased not himself." He will have Christ made the standard and the fountain everywhere. All his reasoning came out of the Cross. The Apostle said, I have nothing that Christ has not given me: if I have said one good, true, musical word, it was because Christ made use of me that I might be a medium of the holy communication. This is the use which the Apostle Paul made of Christ; he found everything in him. We have before endeavoured to get rid of the sophism which says that some preachers read meanings into the text. Nothing of the kind. If it is true it is in the text. Whatever is beautiful is in Christ; in Christ you have all music, all light, all nobleness. Jesus Christ may never have spoken the words which are attributed to him, and yet he may never have spoken anything else in spirit and in substance. We might have more Christ, if we made more of him. We have not realised the fulness of Christ, the plethora; we have not realised that in him dwells

all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. A man may as well attempt to read a pebble into the earth as read any true thought into Christ. All the pebbles are in the earth, and belong to the earth, and are part of the great quarry of the earth : and so all holy, beautiful, tender, musical thoughts are in Christ ; without him there is nothing that is of his quality. Let us then have larger sermons ; let us betake ourselves to waters to swim in ; whatever will plant a flower in a poor man's window is part of the Cross of Christ ; whatever will take up a little child, and clean its face and hands, and give it something to eat, and start it on its little life-journey, comes out of the garden of Gethsemane. We have been fools to allow men to start little rivalries to Christ : we ought to have included all of them as part of the mission of Christ.

The Apostle Paul comes to one of his "Wherefores." He is always in "Therefore" or "Wherefore," and reasoning himself out to some new grasp of Divine realities in the great economy of human life :—"Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God." Now he brings both the Christian and Christ himself into one verse. "Wherefore receive one another : " there is room for speculation, room for arrangement, room for consultation, as who should say, How do you think this ought to be done ? and, What is your judgment upon this topic ? Not so does the Apostle talk : receive ye one another as"—here is the standard, here is the pattern, here is the way—"Christ also received us." How were we received ? As gentlemen, as equals, as virtuous persons who lent a kind of radiant patronage to the Man of Sorrows, and the soul that was acquainted with grief ? No, it was not so. We have only been received as broken-down, crippled, lost, dead, having in us only life enough to say that we do not live. Has Christ received only men of one stature ? A curious army is the Lord's ; there are men there of all inches, men of all complexions, men of all languages : some great, buoyant, royal souls that make the earth green all the year round—God's amaranths that cannot be withered by the snows of winter ; and others so little you can hardly see them, but you can always hear them, they have voice enough, though they are very much like Euclid's definition of a point,

which is, "position without magnitude"; we are to look after them, and make record of them, and add them up as if they were as good as anybody else. A marvellous democracy! And yet every man goes simply for his own weight, bulk, quality, and force. When the Lord weighs a man he does not tell him any lies as to his weight. He is either a substantial man, or a medium man, or a very small man, and that is written down plainly on his ticket. Who are we, then, that we should say, This man does not belong to Christ, and that man ought not to be in the Church? The Church is large enough to hold us all. The Church can take in the most crooked and perverse persons that ever lived. The Church can carry any burden that wants to be carried. It is only the burden that says, I am an ornament which the Church is tired of carrying. If a man shall say, I am very weak and poor, and not worth looking after, but if you can find time to pray for me, and think of me, and love me, then you will make my life brighter, then all the Church would be turned into a mother and nurse, and we should get a perambulator for the creature, and ride him out in all the prettiest parts of the country on all the longest and brightest days in the summer: but if he said he was as good as anybody else, we should allow him to provide his own means of locomotion, and go, in the jovial companionship of himself, anywhere he liked. Everything depends upon the spirit of brotherliness, kindness, simplicity. Everything depends upon a man knowing exactly what he is himself. Let a man keep within the line of his strength, and he is strong; let him overreach that, and he can strike nothing, he can pluck nothing; he is powerless because he is overstrained. This is the great lesson in all life, in business, in literature, in statesmanship, in public speaking. Keep to those subjects you know; work easily within the limits which God has appointed as your boundary, and then every stroke tells, and every apple in the fence belongs to you of right.

## THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE

TO THE

## CORINTHIANS.

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[NOTE.—“The first Epistle to the Corinthians was written by the Apostle St. Paul toward the close of his nearly three-year stay at Ephesus (Acts xix. 10; xx. 31). . . . The bearers were probably (according to the common subscription) Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, who had been recently sent to the Apostle, and who, in the conclusion of this Epistle (chap. xvi. 17), are especially commended to the honourable regard of the church at Corinth.

“This varied and highly characteristic letter was addressed not to any party, but to the whole body of the large (Acts xviii. 8-10) Judæo-Gentile (Acts xviii. 4) church of Corinth, and appears to have been called forth, 1st, by the information the Apostle had received from members of the household of Chloe (i. 11), of the divisions that were existing among them, which were of so grave a nature as to have already induced the Apostle to desire Timothy to visit Corinth (iv. 17) after his journey to Macedonia (Acts xix. 22); 2ndly, by the information he had received of a grievous case of incest (v. 1), and of the defective state of the Corinthian converts, not only in regard of general habits (vi. 1, *sq.*) and Church discipline (xi. 20, *sq.*), but, as it would also seem, of doctrine (xv.); 3rdly, by the inquiries that had been specially addressed to St. Paul by the Church of Corinth on several matters relating to Christian practice.

“The contents of this Epistle are thus extremely varied. The Apostle opens with his usual salutation and with an expression of thankfulness for their general state of Christian progress (i. 1-9). He then at once passes on to the lamentable divisions there were among them, and incidentally justifies his own conduct and mode of preaching (i. 10, iv. 16), concluding with a notice of the mission of Timothy, and of an intended authoritative visit on his own part (iv. 17-21). The Apostle next deals with the case of incest that had taken place among them, and had provoked no censure (v. 1-8), noticing, as he passes, some previous remarks he had made upon not keeping company with fornicators (v. 9-13). He then comments on their evil practice of litigation before heathen tribunals (vi. 1-8), and again reverts to the plague-spot in Corinthian life, fornication and uncleanness (vi. 9-20). The last subject naturally paves the way for his answers to their inquiries



about marriage (vii. 1-24), and about the celibacy of virgins and widows (vii. 25-40). The Apostle next makes a transition to the subject of the lawfulness of eating things sacrificed to idols, and Christian freedom generally (viii.), which leads, not unnaturally, to a digression on the manner in which he waived his Apostolic privileges, and performed his Apostolic duties (ix). He then reverts to and concludes the subject of the use of things offered to idols (x.—xi. 1), and passes onward to reprove his converts for their behaviour in the assemblies of the Church, both in respect to women prophesying and praying with uncovered heads (xi. 2-16), and also their great irregularities in the celebration of the Lord's Supper (xi. 17-34). Then follow full and minute instructions on the exercise of spiritual gifts (xii.-xiv.), in which is included the noble panegyric of charity (xiii.), and further a defence of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, about which doubts and difficulties appear to have arisen in this unhappily divided church (xv.). The Epistle closes with some directions concerning the contributions for the saints at Jerusalem (xvi. 1-4), brief notices of his own intended movements (xvi. 5-9), commendation to them of Timothy and others (xvi. 10-18), greetings from the churches (xvi. 19, 20), and an autograph salutation and benediction (xvi. 21-24).”—SMITH'S *Dictionary of the Bible.*]

### 1 Corinthians i. 1-9.

1. Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God and Sosthenes our brother,

2. Unto the Church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours :

3. Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ,

4. I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ ;

5. That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge :

6. Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you :

7. So that ye come behind in no gift ; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ :

8. Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9. God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

### THE APOSTLE'S SALUTATION.

WE could hardly understand the composition of the Church at Corinth from the opening of this letter. Judging indeed by the salutation, one would suppose that the Church at Corinth was a model church, rich in knowledge, eloquent in utterance, generous in charity, quite an example to all churches.

Yet it was as rotten a constitution as can be found in all the annals of history, everything that was bad was in the Church at Corinth; probably there has been nothing like it since; it was indeed a mystery of iniquity; yet it was the Church of God, and it is described as composed of men who were "called to be saints," and the men were recognised as those who called upon the name of Jesus Christ the living Saviour of the world. And even the Apostle Paul, whose righteousness was neither to be threatened nor bribed, said, "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ." There must be some explanation of these practical contradictions, of these perplexing mysteries. Let us approach the whole consideration calmly.

Corinth was a wonderful city. This was not the Corinth of olden time, the Corinth that flourished two centuries before Paul wrote; this was only a fifty-year old city, the Chicago of Greece, the city which Julius Cæsar had built upon the foundations of the old Corinth. It was in very deed a tumultuous city; the Greek was there, and the Roman, and the Jew; traders, from what would then be called under the whole heaven, were to be found at this seaport; various languages, various customs, ill-remembered traditions, dreams of the past, aspirations after the future, a consciousness that quite a colossus was bestriding the whole city of Greece,—all these things blended and combined and interplayed upon the imagination, the memory, and the consciousness of the Corinthian population. Corinth was subdued; it was a Roman footstool: and in this place there was a Church of God, there were sanctified men, there were praying souls; there were religious persons for whose spirit and purpose and beneficence the Apostle Paul thanked God every day. This must always be so, now that we think of it more carefully. We are as bad as the people who were at Corinth. Human nature advances at a very slow rate. No microscope has yet been invented that can tell how much higher we are than the people who lived thousands of centuries ago. In some particulars the advance is patent, obvious, indisputable: but are we now talking about a mechanical advancement, or a spiritual progress? Are we talking about certificates, or about interior life? Are we

speaking about a calculated civilisation, or about a civilisation that expresses an action of motive and an aspiration after God? The great doctrine which we need every day for our comfort is that character is deeper than conduct. This doctrine may be stated so as to be dangerous; hence the infinite delicacy that is required in guarding it, lest men should pervert it and turn it to their destruction. We are judges of conduct: we are not judges of character. We say a man's conduct is very proper, very guarded, very admirable, is in many respects worthy of applause; and in so speaking we are speaking honestly and according to information, but we know nothing as to what we are talking about. Only God can judge souls. A man of bad conduct may be a good man. This is hard to understand: it seems to be impossible, and in certain social senses it is not only impossible, it is monstrous, and is to be repudiated with indignation: in another sense, character is greater than action, habit, manifestation; the man as he really is has to show himself through conditions that distort his beauty, his proportions, and that turn his very prayers into a species of accusation against his honesty. The Apostle Paul understood all this: none better; hence what a pastor he was, what a shepherd! How he gathered us to his boundless heart after every bout of drunkenness, after every revel, after every far-away wandering, and would still count us among the jewels of God. No doctrine can be so easily perverted. If a man be disposed to accept this as a doctrine and to say, "Such being the case, I may do what I like"; that man is a dog who has no right to the bread which is now being ministered. But if any man should say, "That may be the explanation of my poor life; I knew I had something in me that was better than the things I did; this is putting into words a lifelong feeling of mine: I will take hope; this is the very Gospel of heaven; I will now say, though I can hardly say it for choking sobs, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." Peter's character was greater than Peter's conduct. Peter's heart had not fair play in that battle so suddenly sprung upon him. He was one of those men who having had time to recruit himself would have shown a better surface to society; but suddenly taken, suddenly tempted, suddenly sprung upon, how weak he was and foolish, and how he

yielded himself an easy prey to the destroyer! Yet, though this doctrine may be perverted, we must not give it up on that account. Some men find poison in everything; some eaters could find poison in bread; we must not, therefore, throw the bread away, but use it, and derive health and strength from it. You have committed a thousand sins, and yet there is a possibility of your being a really good man at heart. Do not let the man who has only committed the sins steal this consolation, for he could but lay a felon's hand upon it. The reference must be to spirit, to self-testing, to earnest, critical, unsparing examination. No man will seize this consolation wantonly who has any right to it; he will put out his hand tremblingly and thankfully. No man can accept a gospel with riotousness and wantonness, for his acceptance of it would be its spoliation and rejection. May a man be a drunkard, and yet a Christian? What is a drunkard? Everything will depend upon the definition. We have not hesitated to lay down the doctrine that some men drink with the body, but not with the soul. When a man drinks with his soul he is a drunkard, and I know not that there is any salvation for him; but when his intemperance is a mystery of the flesh, I leave him to God, speaking many a word of hope to him. May a man be a thief, and yet a good man in his heart? What is a thief? Be critical in your definitions, be exact in your judgments, and do not deal out rough justice; penetrate into temptation and circumstance and surrounding, and understand the whole case, and if you cannot do so, then leave it to him who alone can comprehend the whole mystery of human desire and human temptation.

There is nothing that is bad that was not in the Church at Corinth. It was drunken, partisan, riotous, sensual, idolatrous, quite mad with an ungovernable excitement; and yet it was the Church of God. Sometimes God has to abide in poor lodgings; sometimes the blessed Saviour has to sit down where he can, for we cannot always find him a couch of gold with seat of velvet, on which he may recline as a pampered King; we can offer him nothing but a broken heart, a wild, tumultuous, self-contradictory spirit. I know we pray one half of the day, and curse the other half; I am aware that human life is a moral contradiction, a

paradox not to be tolerated by scribe and disputer of this world : yet he who was born in the stable seems to live in it all the time. This is all we can do for him at present, but in the worst of us he sees the make of a better man. How long must an earnest preacher wait to drive off from the appropriation of this sweet doctrine men who have no right to it? Let it be understood as a fact in history, that there was a community at Corinth as bad as it could be to all human appearance, and yet the Apostolic eye saw in it what perhaps it did not see in itself, a grace abounding over a grievous sin. How shall a man be estimated? Who shall number the elements that constitute his composition? and say whether the Ayes have it, or the Noes, whether the affirmative or the negative, whether the majority of the man lies upwards towards light and progress, or downwards towards darkness and decay? The Lord knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are but dust: it is better to fall into the hands of God than into the hands of men. If there is any one little gleam of beauty about us, no larger than a dew-drop, God will see it, and it shall be to him as a jewel he will never part with. What is richer than wealth? and what is that higher wealth without which all money is worthless? It is confidence. Confidence is the true strength of the nation. All commerce, though it may bring in a thousand per cent. every day in the week, is worthless if it does not represent something better than itself—a strong, deep, indestructible confidence. There is a morality which the bank cannot represent in equivalent financial figures. What is larger than experience? Philosophy. But we thought philosophy was a theory? It may be made a theory of, and nothing more: but true philosophy is the larger experience; true confidence is the larger wealth; true character is the larger conduct; the true soul is the true man: on these distinctions, which can only be drawn and worthily estimated in the sanctuary, we must build our hope of progress and victory. If there are preachers who would always hang your sins before you in black festoons, and would overbear you, and would distress you by critical enumeration of the wrong things you have done, they are not God's preachers. There is a time when that requires to be done, but never to be done alone. There is another and comforting side; no man can preach truly about



sin who does not preach worthily about grace. It is possible so to preach about grace as to make men feel their sins without ever naming them; it is possible so to erect a standard as to make every man feel his stature without being publicly measured. Great Apostle, *Saint Paul* in very deed! None can smite as he will smite, but none will bless as he will bless; he will begin with blessing, and he will call up all our strength before he submits us to the surgical examination which is in view; he will build us up that he may take us down.

“Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God”—literally, Paul, a called apostle. He will have need of this authority, so he lays it down in the first breath. It is his apostolicity that is questioned. He must be clear about it himself, or the questioners themselves will throw his mind into incertitude. Every man can write the same sentence if he will be just to the indications of Providence:—“called” to be a merchant; “called” to be an artist; “called” to be an expositor of law; “called” to be a servant; “called to stoop and do the world’s poor drudgery;—but “called”! There are no loose stones in God’s quarry; every one is marked for a place: why should the stone that is marked for the base complain that it was not marked for the pinnacle? Why should the stone marked for the pinnacle complain that it always catches the high winds, and the first snow that falls coldly upon it? whereas it ought to have been hidden in the earth, where it would have been saved from many inconveniences and from all exposures. There is one Builder: let him put us where he pleases. We cannot all be in the pinnacle, we cannot all be in the foundation; it is the Lord’s Temple, let him put the stones where he wants to put them. “And Sosthenes our brother”—our equal, our colleague. So at once all Papacy is expelled from this opening salutation. There is no playing at infallibility. Nobody knows who Sosthenes was even; some think that he was a ringleader of evil persons, and that he is referred to in the Acts of the Apostles; that is doubted by other commentators: the beautiful thing is, nobody knows certainly who he was; and yet he was Paul’s “brother.” We need obscure men to shadow the brilliance of men who are conspicuous. If Paul can sign along with an utterly unknown



man, Paul is no pope. "Our brother"—your brother and my brother, said Paul to the Corinthians. Or, if we omit the word "our" as an interpolation, still the music will read thus, "and brother Sosthenes"—brother nobody. This is how we must look upon God's Church; great men and little men and no men—men without any actual name; a mere label about them to distinguish them from some other people yonder. This is the Pauline democracy; this is the fundamental line of sainthood. "Grace be unto you, and peace." When heathen writers sent a letter they always began with the same word—"health": when the Apostle writes a letter he nearly always—perhaps literally always—begins with some form of "grace," "peace." It is a word worthy of the Gospel. Health represents paganism right well; it was a study more or less of economics, and outward conditions, and phases of civilisation; but the Apostle comprehends health, and enlarges all its best suggestions when he says, "grace, peace." What is health without grace but a great, staring pillar without a capital, without a touch of beauty? What is health without peace but a tree-trunk—all trunk: but grace and peace, what is it?—full of twigs and buds and hints of blossom and promises of crowned summer. The Lord Jesus Christ is not less than any philosopher that went before him. He takes up all philosophical or pagan salutations, assumes them, and in some larger salutation blesses all the world. What would this Apostle have us enjoy? "Grace and peace." He would then have us rich indeed. He is poor who is without this blessing, whatever else he has. Money can never make a man rich; it needs too much counting and looking after and bookkeeping; but grace and peace—given these, in Paul's conception of their magnitude and operation, and a man knows not whether he is in prison or out of prison, in the body or out of the body; knows not whether he is eating luxuries or feeding on the barest necessities of life, for all life is then a luxury to him; he eats and drinks all day, but not as the dog does. No man can be in any doubt as to whether he has grace and peace in his heart. These are singing birds; they are birds that sing in the nighttime. Some poor little songsters seem almost obliged to sing because the sun is so bright and warm; they seem to be selfish birds; they are made, compelled, to sing. Others seem

to wait for the darkness, and to have a great festival when they cannot be seen. Grace and peace will sing to a man at midnight, in every bereavement, sorrow, anxiety, and that kind of wonder which agonises to the point of distress. Have ye these singing-birds in your heart-cage? If not, yours is a dull house, though there be a fire in every room and servants be spreading banquets on your tables all day long. The banquet is nothing when the appetite is wanting.

How noble the recognition!

"I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in everything ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (vers. 4-7).

He could hardly have said more if Corinth had been heaven! how he fortifies himself with the name of the Lord Jesus Christ! In some ten verses we have that name as many times. There can be no doubt as to the Name in which Paul speaks. He mentions himself in the first verse, and then it is Christ, Christ, Christ:—"Jesus Christ"; "Christ Jesus"; "Jesus Christ"; "Jesus Christ our Lord"; "The Lord Jesus Christ"; then simply "Jesus Christ"; then singularly, "Christ"; then "our Lord Jesus Christ" twice; then "His son Jesus Christ our Lord." When the Jews read the book of Esther they first throw it on the ground; they take the book and dash it to the ground because it does not contain the name of God; then they take it and read it, after having signified their disappointment and displeasure by this act of studied violence. We need not throw down Paul's letters because they do not contain the name of Jesus Christ. What were these Corinthians? They were "enriched in all utterance." "Utterance" means "outerance"; the faculty of getting a thing out of you, the genius of ejection. They had the gift of eloquence, of expression. Not only had they something within them, rich and tender, celestial in beauteousness, but they could tell what they knew. They had hands that could stretch out generously, tongues that could speak out boldly; they had not only power of receiving, but power of reproducing. "And in all knowledge" they knew what they were about; they were not uninstructed

men : they came "behind in no gift," that is to say, they came behind others in no gift ; they stood on the very foremost line of the Church ; what others had they had : they were representative men in capacity, in attainment, in power of expression ; they were waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, as all the Apostles were. This mystery is not to be explained by evasion. Nothing can be clearer than that the Apostles expected the Lord Jesus Christ almost immediately ; and nothing is clearer to my mind than that Jesus Christ gave the impression that he was coming presently. But there is a genius of Biblical interpretation, as we have seen ; the Bible does not use words in common ways. Generally it will be found that what is called the plain meaning is not the meaning at all. Herein we have the way of God in educating the world. From the beginning he has told men what he would do, speaking to them in their sense of the word, because they could understand no other sense. Sometimes the teacher has to become as the scholar that he may help the scholar to the next lesson. Sometimes the parent has to talk the baby's language to have any communion with the baby at all ; polysyllables would be lost upon the infant. Sometimes we have to use signs and mere sounds, and to condescend to methods of instruction, which, if adopted amongst grown-up persons, would be ridiculed as frivolous. Beware of those persons who insist upon saying, Look at the words just as they stand there ; simply accept the words as you find them. In a thousand instances that would destroy the Bible. The disciples were always mistaking Christ's meaning ; so were the Jews : thus on every hand he was creating perplexity, bewilderment, and open hostility. "Beware of the leaven," said Christ ; and the disciples said, He means that we have forgotten to take bread. He meant nothing of the kind ; he was referring to the doctrine of the scribes and Pharisees, and Herodians. Is there not a sense in which Jesus Christ is always coming ? and without that sense we could not endure our afflictions, disappointments, and the mockeries which are showered upon us by a jibing world ? The atmosphere in which to live is an atmosphere of expectation. There are many ways of coming. Christ comes by taking us to himself. Christ comes by sudden variations of what are called providential events. Christ comes

by making the world insane until some purpose otherwise impossible is accomplished and established. We have seen nations blindfolded that God might do something to them. Again and again we have seen strong delusions sent upon kings and councillors and warriors, until the Lord carried out some programme that would otherwise have been impossible of execution, without such rending and destruction of nations as could not have been borne. The history of the world is full of miracles when rightly read. We say, This is impossible; and lo it is done. We declare that such and such a mind will never yield, and to-morrow that mind is the most docile in all the world, asking with a child's simplicity what it can do, and offering to be anything and do anything that the world wants. Have ye never read? This may be the coming of Christ: who can tell?

Here is a lesson in tactics. Sometimes we have to make a long carriage-drive to the house; sometimes we have all the road-making to do; it is well to make it broad and smooth. Sometimes we would do better with the people if we went with flowers in our hand, and with the sweet presentation dropped the word of hard instruction. There is a genius in the use of compliments. The wrestler lifts up his opponent that he may throw him down. How rude some people are, and rough and senseless altogether: how wild in violence, how unfamiliar with human nature, how gifted with the insane genius of always saying the wrong thing at the wrong time, and of always saying what ought not to have been said at all! This is marvellous. When was human nature other than very marvellous?

## PRAYER.

FATHER of our spirits, and God of all grace, we come with our morning hymn. We come to sing of thy goodness and thy mercy, which have followed us all the days of our life. Behold thou hast not left us alone; we have not known the meaning and the sorrow of desolation. Thou hast been a God nigh at hand, and not afar off; all the light of heaven has been thy smile, all the winds that blow over the earth have brought with them the fragrance of heaven. We will not therefore be dumb: we will praise the Lord with a loud voice; yea, we will rejoice exceedingly in the God of our salvation. Thou hast done great things for us whereof we are glad; when we have undertaken for ourselves we have failed: when we have rested in the Lord, and waited patiently for him and made a space in our life for the ministry of heaven, behold we have reaped in the seedtime, and in the harvest we have had the joy of summer, and even amid the snows of winter we have plucked a thousand flowers. Thou hast led us through the wilderness, and thy presence has made a garden of it; we will, therefore not be silent, we will lift up our voice gladly and praise the Lord for his manifold riches and goodness, for his wondrous patience, for his ineffable care. Thy grace has been greater than our sin, the black pebble of our guilt has sunk in the infinite ocean of thy love; we have learned concerning God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, that he is love, that he is righteousness, that he is merciful and kind to the unthankful and to the evil, not withholding his rain from the gardens of those who deny him, and from the fields of those who blaspheme his name. Jesus Christ thy Son has taught us to call thee our Father, and to find in thee all the best meaning of that term. Truly we know thou hast been near us; when our father and our mother forsake us, we will feel thine arms stealing round about us in the tenderness of omnipotence; when our way is dark and held up, yea bound round with rocks, then thou dost find a way for our feet and bring us into a wealthy place. We will no more be our own light and guide: there is no light in us, it is not in man that liveth to direct his way; we will abide in God, we will not disquiet ourselves by self-care, we will rest in the infinite love. Guide us, O thou great Jehovah! Amen.

### 1 Corinthians i. 9-17.

9. God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

10. Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

11. For it has been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.

12. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.

13. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?

14. I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius;

15. Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.

16. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.

17. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

### THE APOSTLE'S APPEAL.

WE have noticed how frequently and fervently the Apostle Paul cites the name of Jesus Christ; it is quite as remarkable how he uses with emphasis and unction the name of God. We read of "the will of God"; "the Church of God"; "my God"; "the grace of God"; "God is faithful": the whole confidence is thus put in God. If a miracle is to be wrought, it is by God alone the miracle can be accomplished. This introduction is specifically and uniquely religious. The Apostle is not going to be merely eloquent or argumentative; he is going to base his standing upon the Eternal; he will have a rock under his feet; on no bog of his own making will he venture to stand when he delivers his great appeal to the Corinthian Church. "God will do this" is his constant declaration. If you wonder how the miracle is to be accomplished, the answer is "God will do it"; if you ask how you, so far gone in all evil, are to be brought home and made secure, the answer is, God will do it all—"God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." God does not come into the arrangement at a remote period; there is nothing accidental in the interposition of the Divine power: all the idea of the Church began in eternity, began when God began. The universe is a garment with which he clothes himself. There is only history to us; there is no history to God; it was written in the unwritten record before the world began. God does a few things that we can see, that he may encourage us to believe that he can do other things that are not immediately obvious, or that are only too obvious as to their apparent impossibility of even being done. Out of the earth he will bring a beautiful flower, and presenting



it to us will say, There shall be richer beauty than this brought out of your poor heart. He shapes the universe out of chaos—tumultuous, measureless, shapeless chaos—and says, All this rounding and brightening and glory is but a hint of something I am going to do in human nature: men shall be brighter than suns; hearts shall be more constant than stars. What we see in nature is symbolic of what we shall see in grace. So the Apostle, in coming to the Corinthian Church—dissolute, corrupt, shaken to its very foundations, divided into a thousand parts—says, God will work out the miracle of your perfectness, and your harmony: the God who called is the same God who will crown. Here is the steadfastness of the Christian Church. If this faith were a mere matter of words, clever arguments, skilful mental inventions on the part of disputants, we should have small faith in it, for there may one day arise a controversialist so mighty as to destroy all other lovers of disputation. We are only secure when we stand back in God, when we take refuge in the Eternal, when we repeat the old prophetic formula, “the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”

The Apostle is now ready to undertake his immediate business. In the tenth verse a marked change of tone is noticeable—“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” The Church is only strong when united. It is possible to have a united Church. This would seem at first sight to be utterly incredible, and indeed it can only be made credible by placing the emphasis upon the right word. The Church is suffering to-day very largely from a misplacement of emphasis. The Church is not heretical, painfully, and lastingly divided; the Church is more than an exemplification of cruel schism: but that something more and something better is concealed by the use of false or vicious emphasis. Have we not often seen how possible it is to repeat the words of a message, and yet to leave the message itself undelivered? Let us think of that steadfastly, for the whole secret may be in that one suggestion. The words may be literally quoted, and yet by tone, by emphasis, by weight of voice

here or there, we may wholly misrepresent the meaning of the message; we may have a literal declaration, but not a Divine Gospel from the heart of God. A Gospel sermon may be void of Gospel tones, and being devoid of Gospel tones all its evangelical promises go for nothing; the light that is in the sermon is darkness, and how great is that darkness! The Apostle will have unity, in mind, in judgment, in heart, will he not then permit diversity? No man has spoken for diversity more pointedly and eloquently than the Apostle Paul; it is he who enumerates the diversities that are in the Church; but it is also he who shows that, although there may be diversities of administration, there may be the same spirit, and that the unity is to be found in the spirit, and not in the mere expression of individual genius or special idiosyncrasy of character. How to have unity in diversity is the problem that is given to us for solution. We have it everywhere else—why not in the Church? There is not a man in the country worthy of citizenship who is not a patriot; and yet probably hardly any two men in the country have an identical policy as to this or that particular question. Patriotism is deeper than party. There are times when party is suspended, and with one shout, because with one heart, men say, Defend the country! Save the altar! It is possible in the Church to have all manner of theological speculation, and to recognise charitably every special theological standpoint; it is possible to have a great hubbub of words, quite a tumult of eloquence, quite an Atlantic storm of contradiction, and yet to have unity: because unity is not an affair of words; it is an affair of motive, aspiration, desire. We find our unity not in our opinion but in our love. Had the differences of Corinth been great, had they in any degree been heroic, the Apostle would have recognised their breadth and grandeur; but they were frivolous divisions, merely petty pedantic classifications.

Let the Apostle himself explain the case:—"For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them who are of the house of Chloe"—an elect and saintly lady, whose servants had probably brought the message—"that there are contentions among you"—not high controversies, noble debates, such as stimulate the mind to finer ambitions and endeavours, but small

contentions, and spiteful recriminations, and pedantic distinctions,—"every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ." What a truthful man the Apostle was! He gave his authority for the accusation. Paul never could stoop to the base trick of the anonymous. Everywhere he comes boldly to the front, gives up his authority, makes his statement in his own name, tells exactly how the thought came into his mind, and on what ground it is based, and by what reasons it is justified. Here we have names, references, and particulars. What a skilful man, as well as truthful, was Paul! For he begins by putting his own name first. Had it been a question of honour, he would have put his own name last; but being a question of little mean contention, he says some of you say, "I am of Paul," and Paul never would found a sect; Paul would have nothing to do with a party spirit; he knew that party spirit always kills true trust. And another said, "I of Apollos": I like eloquent preaching; I like rhetorical presentation of truth; I like a smooth, fluent speaker; I like my theology to come upon me with the depth and sweep of the Ganges. And another said, "I of Cephas"—Peter: we know something of Peter's seniority, and we like to be classified under a name so comparatively ancient as the name of Peter. "And I of Christ." Was it possible to be a partizan and to take the name of Christ? Yes: that is the bane worst of all. Surely the Apostle would have said, "Some of you, thank God, say, We are of Christ." He utters no such commendation. He sees that the very name of Christ has been debased by this wicked partizanship.

There are people who suppose that they are not sectarian because they do not belong to any particular communion. They are always the greatest sectarians of all. There are persons who say they have no creed, no theology: generally they are the most narrow-minded of pedants. There are persons who say, We do not take any human name; far be it from us to sail under any merely human flag; we are brethren, we are Christians, we are saints; we do not take any qualifying or limiting name. They need none—if they would call themselves plain hypocrites! The qualification would be wasted upon them. Better have the naked truth, though sometimes it may present rather ghastly

aspects. Have no faith in those people who want to be regarded simply as brethren, Christians, saints, and to deprive themselves of all the little comforts and conveniences arising from classification and qualification. We are still human ; we need definition, for definition is sometimes an assistance and a strengthening of our best nature. We cannot all hang up our garments upon the horizon : some of us need a closer accommodation, a near convenience, for the disposal of some little things that belong to us. We do not thereby limit Christ ; it is Christ who condescends to show himself through the medium of communion, it may be what is called denominationalism, or classification of Church thought : this need not be sectarianism ; it may be the broadest, noblest charity. Are we free from this charge ? Are there not Paulists among us, and followers of Apollos, and people who imagine they would die for Peter ? And are there not some who wish to be known simply by the unexplained and infinite Name ? How does Paul treat this party spirit ? He treats it characteristically. Wherever you find Paul you find him standing on first principles, on acknowledged axioms, on solid historical facts. Paul will not come and talk to these people an upon equal terms, saying with a kind of suppressed whine, Is this wise of you ? Is this the best course you can pursue ? Will it not be better to yield a little here and there, and to live upon a basis of compromise ? No such tone do you find in the Apostle Paul ! At once, inclusively, finally, he says, " Was Paul crucified for you ? " The crucified should be sovereign. He who has suffered most should reign ; he who has made the Church possible should be the Church's Lord. Let us hear how many questions the Apostle puts :—" Is Christ divided ? was Paul crucified for you ? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul ? " We feel already that we are in the hands of a master. This man will not let us escape by evasions. He will have Christ put in his right place. Given Christ at the heart of things, and Paul will allow large liberty as to human aspects, and temporary relations, and immediate conveniences ; but he will not have two Christs ; there is only one Christ in Paul's Church ; his eyes never become so dim that he mistakes the three crosses as of equal value ; he separates with a sacred discrimination, and he claims that Jesus Christ should be the one Lord as he was the one Sufferer. We must follow

Paul's example, and go back to fundamental lines. Who made the Church possible? Christ. Whose Church is it? Christ's. For whose glory does it exist, in no narrow or selfish sense, but as a revelation of his infinite love? For Christ's sake it exists. May we not, then, take the name of Christ, simply, singly, unqualifiably, and use that as our designation? No, because we may indulge our vanity even in that titular distinction. We may think we have done all Christ wants us to do when we have simply labelled ourselves with Christ's name. We can be Christ's in the largest, deepest, and truest sense, without any ostentatious declaration of his Name. To live Christ is better than merely to bear the nominal designation of Christ. Vanity is very subtle in its operation. Sometimes vanity leaps into a prayer suddenly, and turns it into blasphemy; sometimes vanity comes across a man's beneficence, and that which he was going to give as a sacrifice, he presents as a certificate or a claim to distinction. Vanity may therefore come into our choice of the word Christ as the description of our faith: it so specialises us as to inflict dishonour upon other people, and therefore its use may be wrong; as who should say, Look at me: I am simply called Christ's; other men are called Episcopalians, Congregationalists, Presbyterians. All these names I abjure, and if you wish to know what I am I wish to be known simply by the name of Christ. The man who talks so is either a fool or a knave. If a man wants to be Christ's you will not hear him saying anything about it in any invidious spirit; he will not condemn other Christians that he may raise himself on a higher pedestal; he will recognise diversity, and show how possible it is to have unity in difference. The misplacement of emphasis is to be found in the fact that we are always putting forward the wrong points; the points may themselves be useful, but we put them out of proportion; we create a false perspective, and thus we make the near the great: whereas if we placed it at its right point in the line, it might be beautiful, illustratively useful, but being put out of its right position, it distorts the whole picture, and goes itself for less than it is worth. Find out the principal things, and magnify these. Faith is greater than creed: faith is eternal, creed is variable. Rest is greater than the mere time on which the rest is to be taken. Revelation is greater than the



book in which it is disclosed. Brotherhood is larger than any limitation of mere blood or physical kinship. So we should get at the heart of things, at the Christly element, at the eternal quantity, and lay our emphasis there with a right cordial voice.

The Corinthians talked much about baptism. The Apostle apparently had heard of that love of a special sacrament or ordinance. He says, "were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" then it were a poor baptism; there is nothing in it; you are baptized by water that will dry on you and be forgotten; unless you are baptized by fire your poor Christianity will soon decline and wither away. "I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other." What an illustration this, of what is meant by inspiration! Here is an inspired man correcting himself; first being very positive that he had baptized only one or two, and then remembering that he had baptized another household; and then, confusedly, half-forgetting whether he had in fact baptized anybody or not. Here is the truthful man; here is the really inspired Apostle;—inspiration not relating to the memory of incidental facts and circumstances, but referring to the grand doctrine "lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name." That is the point on which the emphasis is laid. Is the Apostle then despising baptism? Nothing of the kind. Is he in any sense undervaluing it? No. What is he doing? He is putting it in its right perspective. As compared with the Crucifixion it is nothing in value: as compared with life, faith, love, it is a mere mechanical form, useful as a symbol, appointed as an ordinance, but still capable of being thrust out of proportion, unduly and absurdly magnified, and thus rendered insupportable and immeasurably mischievous. How grand the Apostle is here! Looking upon the whole Corinthian Church, he says, "I thank God that I baptized none of you"; not that baptism is wrong, not that I do not baptize, but I can see now that you have a disposition to magnify little things instead of great things, and you have a genius for distortion, and it would have been a very easy thing for you to have said, "Paul baptized us, therefore



we are Paul's men." I thank God I had next to nothing to do with your baptism ; not that baptism is wrong or useless, but that you would have made a false application of a very small fact. How prone we are to operate in this direction, to assume false honours, to shelter ourselves behind false securities, and to diminish the glorious Christ into a mere mechanical form or passing phase of history ! How may we recover ourselves from this ? By always asking the one question, Who was crucified for us ? Who gave himself for us ? How does the Apostle come into this argument ? He comes into it, first of all, by right of apostolicity ; that we have already seen ; then he comes into it with his usual tender persuasiveness, as if he would plead upon his knees. Saith he, "Now I beseech you," that is an attitude of humiliation, that is a tone of courtesy—"Now I beseech you, brethren." The tone heightens a little, and a council fraternal is called upon the spot. "Now I beseech you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Now the occasion is sublime ; the Lord is present, and under his presence must this controversy be adjusted. So he proceeds to put up the Cross, to draw the Corinthian Church around the Cross, and to have the whole conflict settled by the spirit of the Cross. Every controversy can be settled at the Cross, can be completely settled, finally settled ; and no soul will retire from that centre saying that he has got an advantage over his brother. When Christians meet there they will be bowed down in a common penitence, they will be chastened by a common humiliation ; they will see so much of their Lord as to see but little of themselves ; and they will say, For Christ's sake, let us forgive and forget, utterly blot out, with all possible obliteration, every unholy, irritating, exasperating memory ; and let us remember that we are nothing except so far as we are in Christ ; our testimony is useless if it be not begun, continued, and ended in Christ. We have been unkind, ungracious, uncharitable : now in sight of the bleeding Lamb of God let us cease to see one another's littlenesses and begin to see one another's excellences. That was the Pauline method. Any man who adopted that method, by its very adoption proved himself to be called—called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ.

## PRAYER.

WE bless thee, Father in heaven, for the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ: it unites all things, it gives form and meaning to thy government, it creates the tears of the universe, it creates the songs of heaven. God forbid that we should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ—shameful, glorious Cross. We are crucified with Christ; nevertheless we live, yet not we, but Christ liveth in us; and the life we now live in the flesh we live by faith in the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us. We are Christ's miracles; he has taken us at the spear-point in the deadly fight; we are the Lord's prey, we have been captured by that man of war. Help us to look at all life from the point of view created by the Christ; then there shall be no night, no separating sea, no desolate wilderness, no death; the grave will have no victory, and the night can hardly make room for all the stars that throng upon her darkness. Give us to live in Christ, and for Christ, and to Christ; may he be our song, our subject, our confidence in life, our hope in death. Thou knowest us altogether—the cold heart, the reluctant will, the eager spirit, the soul that sheds all its tears in secret, the contrite heart: look upon us according to our pain and need, and come to us with all the balm of Calvary; may grey hairs be no sign of age, may the stooping form be a proof of the ascending spirit and the ripening heart, and may we all become, through Christ and the eternal Spirit, better and better, like a ripening harvest. Amen.

## 1 Corinthians i. 13.

"Is Christ divided?"

## PARTY SPIRIT.

HOW comprehensive were all the questions put by the Apostle Paul! How instinctively and therefore instantaneously he always went to the root of the matter! He knew nothing about evasion or double-dealing of any kind; he had no part or lot in anonymous insinuations or statements. We have seen that he gave up his authority for assuring the Corinthians that there were divisions and contentions of many kinds in that tumultuous Church. Now he draws the attention of the Church to the one all-determining inquiry, What is Christ's relation to

the Church? Everything must stand or fall by the reply to that inquiry. One only wonders that this was a Church at all. That is the mystery of grace. This is a departure from our little mechanical prejudiced conceptions of a Church. We have seen what culture did for Greece, if Corinth may be taken as representing that classic land. Culture led away from God. Culture had its prayer; but in the streets of Corinth public prayer was offered that the gods would increase the number of the prostitutes. Culture without humility, culture without a cross shadowing it, what is it but selfishness, vanity, idolatry? Yet Paul finds a Church here, calling it the Church of God. We are too pedantic in our classification. We should look at the manhood rather than at the mere circumstances limiting and qualifying it. The king is not named by any one appellation. Charles the First was not the king; the king was within him. He was still to be prayed for as the king. We look at his little doings, his mischief-makings, his vanities, ambitions, tergiversations, and grow eloquent in our condemnation about him. But all that has nothing to do with the king; the king is there, whether for the moment he be devil or angel; both these classifying terms must be dropped, and the term "king," royal and significant, must stand, whoever for the moment the man may be who debases the office. So with the Church of God; we must look at the ideal Church, at the thing signified. We are not the Church, else what a poor Church it were! Take out littleness and ignorance, our selfishness and vanity, our bigotry and self-idolatry, and how the enemy might make merry over us as the Church! How he might fling our prayers in our face, and echo our songs with a suggestive cadence! The fool would not be foolish only, but unjust. He does not know whereof he affirms. The Church of God is within; an invisible, spiritual, ideal germ: an outline shaped in clouds, and yet to be realised as it were in the granite and rocks of eternity. So the man is within the man. Say not you will judge the poor creature by his conduct, for then no gaol would be large enough to hold so much wickedness; then no asylum would be large enough to accommodate such overflowing and immeasurable imbecility. You do not see the man; only God sees him: he is better than he appears to be, if sometimes he is worse than the surface

would enable us to conclude. So we repeat the sacred doctrine we have already ventured to lay down that God is judge: he knows whether we are his kings and priests and Church, or whether we are refuse and offal, living and hopeless offences.

Amongst the deprivations and general debasements of the Church at Corinth there was one which may be designated by the term Party Spirit—"Every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ." There were denominations within the denomination. Within an apparently united Church there were all kinds of sects, all degrees of animosity, all temperatures of virulence. Paul will not have this. He will at all events extricate himself from this prostitution of his name. Saying nothing of Apollos or Cephas, he says, "Was Paul crucified for you?" No man came so near to being crucified for the Church. How he approaches the Son of God! In self-surrender, in pious obliteration, how nearly he is on the very Cross of his Lord! Yet between Paul's crucifixion and Christ's there lies an infinite distance of significance. There can be but one Christ; his robe is seamless, his crown fits no other brow; he is the one Lord, he cannot be divided. Yet every day we are trying to divide him. Party spirit was not the blemish of Corinthian ecclesiastical society alone; party spirit is rife to-day. Party spirit is not truthful. A religious party man cannot speak the truth. When he is most vehement he is most perjured. Who can tell exactly what his opponent believes? and who can state in words, which his opponent would accept, his opponent's exact position? Or who, by some happy chance hitting upon the very words, can utter those words in the tone which an opponent would adopt and endorse? The party man need not intentionally tell lies; he simply can hardly help doing so. His prejudice beclouds his vision, his bias turns him away with a kind of significant haughtiness or revulsion from the man whom he is attempting to represent. We have heard a theologian declare that there is a band of men newly risen who declare that it is safe for men to die in their sins. This statement has been made by a man of celebrity, by a man of capacious and ardent mind. Now refer the statement to the parties implicated and say, Do you teach that it is safe for men to die in their sins?

They redden with anger, they flush with indignant shame, that such a travesty of their views should have been perpetrated. Yet they are all honourable men. The accuser did not mean to falsify, but his prejudice was larger than his reason, his fury overwhelmed his temper, and he showed how dangerous a thing it is to pick out words for other men when the attempt is to express the deepest convictions of the soul. It is not safe for men to die in their sins; it is not safe for men to live in their sins; it is not safe for men to have any sympathetic relation to sin. How tremendous the blasphemy to insinuate that any Christian man could suppose that it was safe for men to die in their sins! If this calumny has not yet defiled our English communications, let us be grateful that we are separated from it at least by the width of the Atlantic. Party spirit is not sincere. This is the more notable because it appears to be awfully in earnest. Sincerity is a larger term than may at first be supposed; it involves and connotes many elements of judgment, honesty, sense of what is due to man, to truth, to God. It is possible to be sincere at one point, and to be there even burningly severe to be there even scorchingly earnest; but for want of a proper width and range of judgment it is possible also to lose the one burning point of sincerity. Distinguish between sincerity and bigotry. Sincerity should be large, should be calm, should be refined, should have the Divine power of patience, and the Divine attribute of hope. Madness may be a form of sincerity; it is not the less an expression of insanity and a guarantee of danger. Party spirit is not acceptable. It wounds the very Lord it attempts to serve. Jesus Christ will have nothing to do with our parties; he died for the world; he tasted death for every man, and he only knows the meaning of that all-involving expression "every man." We hastily pronounce the words, but he had eternity to think them over, and he has eternity in which to redeem his meaning when he bowed his head in death for every man. Our little impatience, our self-extinguishing, self-exhausting vehemence, our professed regard for truth at the expense of the larger human feeling, may be well-intentioned tributes, but he never allows them to be laid acceptably upon his altar. We have not a divided Christ; we have a united and indivisible Lord,



What is the explanation of difference? for difference is to be tolerated, and is to be recognised with thankfulness; only difference need not by any irresistible compulsion become party spirit. We have seen how the Apostle Paul maintained the right of diversity, gloried in diversity, showed how diversity and unity are perfectly compatible. What is the explanation of rational, healthy, useful difference? The explanation is that no man can see all the truth, and no one man can represent the totality of God's thought. We are all needed. The mischief is that we separate one testimony from another, and regard as an integer that which after all may be but the smallest of fractions. Peter read something that Paul had written, and he said, "These things are hard to be understood." Did he then expel Paul? Nay verily; for in the very confession that Paul had written some things hard to be understood, Peter described him as "our beloved brother Paul,"—that great, strange, sometimes almost unbalanced and wild mind, that genius that hovered near the eternal throne and snatched notes from angelic music, and came and told the Church with more or less of incoherence what he had seen and heard; Peter did not understand him; did not profess to stand shoulder to shoulder with that man, but he had grace enough to describe him as "our beloved brother Paul." Probably the Apostle Paul may have heard something of this, for when he comes to define his own ministry and function, he distinctly says, "my gospel." There is a sense in which that is true of every man. Each man has his own view of God, his own conception of truth and duty, his own little light of hope. These are incommunicable gifts. Man is put in trust of some individuality of faith; it is enough if in his stewardship he be found faithful. We should gain much if we could realise the fact that each man has what he may honestly and modestly denominate his own gospel; that is to say his own view of the Gospel, his own way of explaining the Gospel, his own delight in the Gospel; let each man speak out of his own consciousness and his own experience, and what is lacking in monotony will be made up in individuality; and individuality properly construed and regulated 's the guarantee of spiritual energy in the Church.

The Apostle James will write a letter and will dwell upon



works ; he will have works done ; he will have an industrious and self-attesting Church ; he will demand every day an account of the acts of yesterday. John will follow James, and will write of love. Where, then, is the Church ? In Peter ? No. In Paul ? No. In James ? No. In John ? No. Where is the Church ? In all of them. The organ is not a flute or trombone, clarionet or bassoon. What is it ? All of them ; and more still, and all worked from a centre, and all inspired by a common knowledge, and all united in expressing lofty, martial, pensive, comforting, or rousing music. You have not heard the Gospel if you have only heard one man preach it. The Gospel is infinitely larger than any one man's little brain. We have only heard the Gospel when we have read all the Evangelists and all the Apostles. Otherwise only one writer would have been required to write the Bible. Moses might have done it, or Ezekiel ; Paul might have written the whole of the New Testament, or John ; but God required the truth to be presented from every possible point of view, and each man comes into this great treasure-house to take out of it that which he most particularly needs for the moment. Is justification by faith ? Yes. Is justification by works ? Yes. Is predestination taught in the Bible ? Yes. Is free will taught in the Bible ? Certainly. You must study the proportion of faith ; you must grasp the philosophy of revelation, and you must live and move and have your being in the Divine rhythm. You cannot snatch at heaven's prizes : you must live long before you begin to see how far away the horizon is, and yet what a wondrous part it plays in defining issue and boundary. Some minds can only be approached along doctrinal lines. You must come to them with philosophies, theologies, high speculations and debates. Blessed be God, such minds are few in number. Other minds could only be secured in sacred custody and imprisonment for Christ by proceeding along sympathetic lines. You come to them with offers to dry away the stains of sorrow, to bind up the broken heart, to make the grave tremble with immortality. Then you touch the heart, and fire the imagination, and excite the feelings with holy and rational ecstasy. Other minds can only be approached along what may be termed selfish lines. You must give them a good substantial heaven and hell to begin with ; you must guarantee that they

are going to heaven wherever anybody else is going to. Then they say, This is definite! So it is; it is extremely definite. The number of the selfish is large; they do not care for high reasoning, for noble sentiment, for broad and generous interpretation of things. They want to be assured that somebody else will burn for ever and ever, and ever and ever; and then they will feel comfortable. Even they may be converted! Do not let us limit the grace of God. Even people who have a selfish heaven may become chastened and ennobled by the long-continued action of the Spirit of God, until they shall feel that heaven is here, and hell is here; and they will speak of the one with holy rapture, and of the other with pain, ill-concealed, but not the less expressive and instructive; they will feel that all these things must be left in the hands of the living Father, who alone knows all about the case, and who will do justly, though he turn the wicked into perdition. The man of one view always has an advantage over the broad-minded man. We have heard how formidable an opponent the man of one book is; that is to say, he knows that one book so thoroughly that he cannot be caught at a mischance or misadventure in the reading and interpretation of it. Other men may know a hundred books, but they may not know the hundred books so well as this man knows the one book; therefore he is thought to be formidable. So with the man who has but one idea in theology, or in Christian thinking, whatever its name may be. He is vehement on that point; there he burns like an oven; he is not troubled with doubt, because he is not troubled with indigestion; he is not aware that the horizon is larger than his house, it only appears to be so to eyes that cannot distinguish between differences. The glazier has less difficulty than the telescope maker. What difficulty can a glazier have? But the telescope maker, how he studies, calculates, polishes, adjusts, enters into the mystery of distance, and light, and optics; how he is a mathematician before he is an instrument-maker; through what hard words he passes to the simplicity of his conclusion! This would be very satisfactory, only oftentimes the glazier mistakes himself for the telescope-maker. We need the Pauline mind; we cannot understand it, but we feel that it is a master mind, and we, so to say, nestle up towards our beloved brother-father Paul, saying to

him, with look if not with words, You know how it is; pray for us; we cannot understand all your words, but verily it is God that justifieth you, that sanctifieth you, that enlighteneth you; we know it; oh, take care ever of us, put your pastoral arms around us, play the shepherd to our poor wandering life, for we know the wolf is after us, and we need a huge man's strength to enfold us in security.

What was Paul's method of meeting all this party spirit? It was a method characteristic of his mind. It was comprehensive, theological, profound, noble. Instead of saying, "What are your differences? and let me see if I can adjust them," he brushes them all away, and says, "Was Christ divided?"—it is Christ you are misrepresenting, it is Christ you are misunderstanding, it is Christ you are putting to shame; I will not hear your contentions, I will magnify my Lord. The Cross of Christ was the standard of judgment as well as the centre of observation, and everything depended upon men's relation to the Cross of Christ. What is the reason of that reference? This, that Crucifixion is the central idea in the Church. The Cross measures all things, determines all things, and ought to rule all things; and he who has accepted the doctrine of Christ's Crucifixion has by so much entered upon the practice of his own. That is the holy secret, that is the Divine discipline; not that I have only to look at my crucified Lord as a distant spectacle, I have to reproduce his Crucifixion in my own heart as a personal experience. Christ's work was the atonement; my work is its acceptance, and obedience to its spirit. I have to be crucified with Christ, and to have no self. When I gave myself to Christ I gave myself wholly; he would not take part of me—it was a complete surrender. So now as to who is to be first, or second, or last, we have no time for such mechanical and frivolous inquiries; each is to be first in love, first in prayer, first in obedience.

Then the Apostle associates this great Christian act with the mystery of the personality and sovereignty of God, as we have already seen. How often does the word of God occur in these introductory verses: "It pleased God"; "after that in the

wisdom of God"; "the power of God"; "the wisdom of God"; "the foolishness of God"; "the workings of God"; "but God hath chosen"; "God hath chosen." Before this noble utterance, how mean is the contention of Corinthian partisanship; how Paul and Apollos and Cephas drop out of view when the Apostle comes to set forth the right perspective, and the right relation of Divinity, revelation, duty, and destiny. We must get back to great principles if we would get back to profound peace. Paul has his place; Apollos has his function; Cephas we cannot do without, for he burned, and in his glowing energy he warmed and inspired us all. But even Christ, as we have seen, may itself become a party name. We may crucify the Son of God afresh in using a great name for little purposes. That is debasement, that is decoronation—to use the signet of God in stamping our private epistles, to use the name of Christ to pass into the currency of the Church some ill-moulded name of our own. Where there is doubt there should be silence; where there is uncertainty there should be love; where the doctrine is too high for us we should clasp hands, saying, "Brothers, the doctrine is above us far, we cannot attain its gleaming height; but we can pray, we can love, we can wait." A Church that adopts that attitude need never put itself to the shame of defending its own orthodoxy. **It is enough for such a Church that it can live.**

## 1 Corinthians i. 18-31.

**"For the preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness: but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (ver. 18).**

### THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS.

**W**HAT is termed a whole body of theology might be gathered from this first chapter. Here we find God, Christ, the Church, the mystery of the Cross, and the fact of redemption. Why does the Apostle gather all these great doctrines around him, so compendiously and so severally? What is his business? We have not seen him in this urgent mood before; usually he has taken time to his work, but he is in it before we imagine he has begun it. He is excited. The excitement of love is upon him, and that is the keenest excitement of all. His charity is offended, his excellence of heart is annoyed, his sense of right is assailed. He has heard that the people in the Church at Corinth are setting up parties, cultivating small bigotries, multiplying contemptible sects. This the Apostle will never consent to. He says, This is wrong, this is contrary to the spirit of the Cross; sectarianism and Christ cannot live together; party spirit and the Crucifixion are as opposed to one another as darkness is to light. So he gathers all his thunders and lightnings, all his majestic conceptions of God, humanity, truth, destiny; he will not attempt to overthrow this by some wind of contempt, he will come down upon it as from eternity and destroy it in the name of the Lord. There must somewhere be a point of rest. There must be some fixed quantities in this stupendous universe, else what is to become of it? We are saved by the points of rest, by the centres of tranquillity. Foolish mariner he, who says he will take a ship over the Atlantic by the help of the moon. Yet the moon is a fair orb, the moon has been praised to her face by audacious yet reverent poetry; hardly a boy but has

said something sweet to the moon and about the moon; the moon has been called a banner of silver hung out in the sky; classical names have been attached to her; yet no mariner ever took his course across the water by that banner of silver. Not that he has any objection to the orb itself; there is nothing objectionable in the moon. It is not aggressive, but it is changeable. That is the reason. Yonder in the north is a point of light you can always rely upon; the captain lays hold of it, and gets home. That is what men will not do. They will run after any moon; they call its changeableness variety: whereas when the soul is interested it is treachery. I suppose there will be moon-worshippers until the end of time. When the Apostle has any great argument to state and apply he stands upon a rock, he puts out his hands towards the north star, to the quiet eternal planets, and then things may swing around him as they like, but he will not swing in them, except in so far as he has hold of the things that abide. He has such a conception of Christ that he will not be disturbed by partisanship and party quarrels at Corinth or anywhere else. He will cling to Christ; he will say, What does Christ mean? what is the meaning of the Cross? what is the purpose of God in the gift of his Son? and thus he will fix his attention upon things polar, immutable. Thus, unless we have a right conception of eternity we can never make a proper use of time. Time is nothing by itself; there is no sense or reason or rhythm in it: the whole value of it is in its relation to something greater than itself, and something which it dimly and feebly typifies. If we do not know eternity we do not know time. If we do not know astronomy we do not know geography, except as an invention in the painting of lines and sections and circles, and distributions of properties which may be changed to-morrow by some sudden battle. Dean Alford tells of a quaint old Cambridge preacher who said in his pulpit, his throne of power, "Eternity is like a great clock, the pendulum of which says 'tick' in one century, and 'tack' in another: now, said he," erecting himself and facing the scholars of Cambridge, "go home and calculate the length of the pendulum." What are our little calculations about if they do not come out of eternity and return to eternity, and if they do not bring to bear things abiding upon things transient? This is the wise



philosophy of life: the one thing that abides amid all the party creations and controversies is the Cross of Christ. That will keep us all steady, solid, right.

The Apostle refers to certain people, with a little tone of sarcasm in his voice. Sometimes he could be very ruthless in criticism and crushing in condemnation. The old Saul would occasionally revive in him. Once he was writing so carefully and quietly, and suddenly the old Saul of Tarsus flamed up in him, and he said to his young correspondent, "There are certain people that are going about talking nonsense in the Church, whose mouths must be stopped." That was Saul; that was an old plan of his! So now he says, "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world?" Where are these men when you want them most. You do not know, and they do not know. They are of no use. Yet how the wise man can shake his head and look as if he knew a great deal! He will be of no service to you in the hour and article of death. He will be wise enough then to get out of the way. Yet some young minds are victimised by the "wise," who live upon their own consciousness, who keep their manufactories of nonsense within themselves, and turn it out in endless rolls,—men who never risked anything for the world's bettering; men who never did anything but talk, so as to prove how little they had to talk about. They had no text. What is the sermon if it be not the text magnified, amplified, and in a sense illuminated? But these men have no text; therefore what they say has no authority; it issues from no throne, and returns to no tribunal; it is an empty noisy wind. "Where is the scribe?" the man of the inkhorn, the grammarian, the letter-monger, the man who will discourse vehemently, so vehemently at least as the infinite coldness of his little nature will permit him, about a semicolon. The poor little scribe loses his rest because he cannot settle whether the comma should be before the word or after the word, or whether there should not be an apostrophe before the *s* in some cases. How his mind is troubled about that! how grave he looks! how wrinkled he is! how he stoops about the shoulders! Why? Because he is a scribe, a grammarian, a man of syntax; a great parser, but nothing at poetry. "Where

is the disputer of this world?"—the man of controversy, the man who loves an argument, the man who is always looking round to see whom he can argue with: where is he, in view of the Cross, in view of the great necessities of life, in view of the solemn, impending, inevitable future? Where are they? Nowhere. These men are troublers of society. It is easy to ask questions, to suggest difficulties, to multiply the stumbling-blocks that lie in the way of honest progress. The mind, when it is most truly and Divinely excited, may easily be turned aside by some temptations, shot upon it so quickly that there is no time to reason with it; but the turning aside is but for a moment; because the excitement is Divine it will return, pursue its way, and complete its purpose. The Apostle had to deal, let us see carefully, with the wise, with the scribe, and with the disputer of this world. These classes still live. They will live to the end of time, and to the end of time they will be unblest by men whose hunger they cannot feed and whose thirst they cannot assuage.

See how the Apostle describes the whole method and economy of God in regard to this matter. How will the Lord God proceed? First, "by the foolishness of preaching." We all know this to be a misrepresentation of the Apostle's meaning. The foolishness is not in the preaching as an art or practice; the foolishness is in the thing that is preached,—by the foolishness of the preaching of Christ, by the foolish way of proceeding, by setting up a Cross as the answer to human sin: such stupendous folly was never seen by man before,—that God should die, that God should make an atonement to himself, that God should through weakness find the way to power, and through distress and trouble infinite find the way to rest and peace. This is like the Lord's way of proceeding in everything. Given a certain set of circumstances to know how God will act, and we have to draw up the course of his action. Now, when we have written with the patience and criticism of the scribe, compare what we have written with what we should see in Providence: what could be more different, more contrastive, more mutually annihilative? This is the way of the Lord. It is not seen only in the Cross of Christ, in the foolishness of the thing that is

preached ; it is seen everywhere, in all history, in all providence, in every day's history. We should proceed straightly, we should proceed promptly : by our very littleness we have a trick of energy. We want everything settled before sundown. So does the Lord, only his sundown is a long way off. There is no sundown ; what we call sundown is but a momentary expression of convenience ; the sun goes on his beaming way even after we think the sun has set. God has a day to work in, and before the day ends his purpose will be completed in righteousness. Let us wait ; let us learn that patience is often the best prayer ; that long-suffering is often the only theology we want. Then God proceeds by the disappointment of prejudice ; because the wise ought to have some little word in this matter ; the scribe really ought to be asked to dip his pen if it were only once ; the disputer ought to have a little space created for him that he might enter into his argument with some degree and show of pomp. And yet the Lord sweeps them aside, and will have none of them. This was the way with the Lord Jesus Christ. He never allowed a scribe to open his mouth, except that he might have an opportunity of rebuking him, and showing him how little title he had to be described as a writer of the mysteries of the kingdom of God. No Pharisee would Jesus Christ call so long as he remained a Pharisee ; no disputer would he permit to enter into his ministry. Men who are in the ministry of Christ have simply to repeat their lesson ; to tell what their Lord told them, but to tell it in the language of the day. The liberty is not to change the message, but to vary its delivery. God proceeds by way of rebuking vanity :—"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." Can God do without them ? He can do without us all. The darkness and the light are both alike to him. He does not need any one of us.

The Apostle proceeds to a very suggestive climax :—"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise : and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty ; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are." "Hath

God chosen"; then we should omit the word "and," and read "things which are not": he does not introduce this as another element, but he sums up the whole policy of God in these words—"things which are not"; base things, things which are despised, hath God chosen—things which are not, to bring to nought things that are. His providence is a continual miracle. If we could see a battering-ram, and see the wall that was to be shaken down, we should begin a process of calculation—for we are all scribes—and say, The instrument is equal to the occasion; the wall is so high, so broad; the instrument is so large, and so energetic, and the momentum is calculable in mathematical terms: now proceed. This is not God's way. We see the thing to be shattered, but we do not see the energy that shatters it; but down goes the wall, away goes the mighty rampart, the stubborn bastion—all down! What did it? A breath from eternity. What saith the Apostle?—"Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble." Then there are some wise, mighty, noble. Circumstances do not always go against the aristocratic and the eminent; men should not necessarily condemn them because they are great, after the pattern of this world's greatness. Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, one of the greatest workers in the Christian field in her day, said with characteristic sweetness, "I owe my salvation to the letter 'm'; blessed be God," said that sweet soul, "It does not say, 'any' mighty, 'any' noble; it says 'many' mighty, 'many' noble: I owe my salvation to the letter 'm.'" If it had been "not any noble" where would the Countess have been? Yet how differently we act towards those who are wise and mighty and noble! How we fawn upon them; how we call upon them, even if we have to go to the side door! We have lost our Christian dignity. This spirit was well rebuked by one illustrious clergyman in his day. He was the son of a peer. He could not help that; do not blame him; his consent was not asked. But the lady parishioner upon whom he called would hear of his ancestry and pedigree and birth and advantages. Said the truly great man when the palaver was over, "Madam, I am surprised that you should talk about such frivolities: I have come to speak to you upon matters of eternity." There he was wise, there he was mighty, there he was noble. There is a nobility which men

cannot help having, nor are they to be condemned because they possess it; it may be only a nobility of name, or it may be a nobility of name justified by nobility of character, and if not so justified, then the nobility becomes, not a decoration, but a disgrace. Let every man justify his nobility, and the world will not withhold from him the palm which is due to faithfulness, integrity, and industry. Thus Paul will drive off the wise, the scribe, the disputer, the mighty, the noble, all nominal claimants, patrons and dividers, and he will have nothing seen but Christ; for, said he, as long as the Church looks at Christ it will be unable to see those distributions of rank or power, and take part in those mean controversies, which are characteristic of earth and time and sense. There is a beautiful scene. What you look upon is a silver lake, not a ripple on its smooth face, and the light that is in it is the sun; see how the sun lies in the depths of the lake as in an under sky: does the lake create the sun, or only reflect it? That is what the Church does: it does not create the Cross, it reflects it; it does not originate the Atonement, it accepts it; it does not invent Christ, it receives him and adores him. What a wondrous landscape is that on the canvas! what hill and dale, and wood and water, and light and shade! what painted music! what poetry! Did the artist create the landscape, or only paint it? He only painted it. That is what the Church does. All that is beautiful in the Church is but a transcript, a writing, a transference of something heavenly into an earthly image and symbol and visibility. Does the husbandman create the harvest, or only reap it? Does the seedman create the seed, or only sow it? What does the preacher make? The sermon, not the text. Why this suppression of human vanity? why this snubbing of the wise, the scribe, the disputer, the mighty, the noble? The reason is given in these words, "that no flesh should glory in his presence." The moment we begin to glory we begin to weaken. Self-consciousness lives upon its disease, and eats up its own vitals. Let a man live in himself, for himself, upon himself, and he will consume himself. We were made truly for one another. Call upon the Eternal Father, the Eternal Christ, the Eternal Spirit. In God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost we find what alone can satisfy our appetences, if those appetences are allowed to express



themselves in their natural destined aspiration. If we are living upon anything else, then we have ill-treated our organism. If aught but God can satisfy the human heart, the human heart has played traitor to God, and has abandoned the fountain and origin of life and grace. There is an argument in this distaste for God; there is a whole history in this aversion from the Holy One. Let men dispute as they may, whether Adam fell or did not fall, every man knows that he himself has fallen low enough. The self-fall can never be denied.

Paul says in one word you have everything you want in Christ—"of him"—that is, of God—"are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption": word upon word to express the redundancy of the provision which is made in Christ for the education, the progress, and the sanctification of the human heart. Do you want wisdom? It is in Christ. Righteousness? It is in Christ. Sanctification? It is in Christ. Redemption—full, complete, involving the overthrow of the last enemy and the inheritance of immortality? It is in Christ, "That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." We have no need to go to the wise, because we have wisdom in Christ; we have no need to go to the scribe, because we have righteousness in the Cross; we have no need to go to the disputer of this world, because we have sanctification and redemption in the Cross. Everything we want is there. Why should men roam in quest of the true riches? Here they are, here at the Cross, here in the wounded Lamb of God. Let us abide here. Let us risk our all on Christ. Lord, abide with us!



## 1 Corinthians ii. 1.

"And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God."

### PAUL'S STYLE OF PREACHING.

**D**ID the Apostle voluntarily deny himself the pleasure of being eloquent? Was he not an eloquent man? Not in the sense in which Apollos was eloquent, the fluent, ornate, dazzling style of eloquence, but rather suggestive, stimulating, audacious, and yet chastened with the sublimest spirit of devotion. Was Paul his very best intellectual self when he went to Corinth? He says he was not. In one sense, the Corinthians saw the poorest aspect of his manifold nature; and yet, if they had known it, they were in reality seeing the very best aspect of the man's ministry. But they were sensuous, objective, looking out for spectacle and colour, and not listening with the inner ear, which alone can hear the true music of life and speech. The Apostle had a specific reason for not being verbally eloquent: he was talking to children; he would rebuke their intellectual vanity by presenting himself under aspects that were, apparently at least, humiliating. But the reason is deeper than a mere accommodation to Corinthian infancy; the reason is given in plain terms. The Apostle went to Corinth to declare the testimony of God. That was an all-explanatory reason; in the glory of that function the worker lost all his individuality. The Apostle recognised himself to be but a vessel, an instrument, a medium; he himself being as surprised as those who heard him at the music which God sounded through his voice. It is always so with great teaching and great speaking; the speaker is as surprised as the hearer. Why? Because he yields himself to the hands of God, and he knows not what tune will be played upon the instrument of his soul. Who ever found the Apostle Paul wondering what he should say, as to the substance, the pith, and the purport of his doctrine? The Apostle Paul was an

errand-bearer ; he had himself nothing to say to the world ; he had a testimony to deliver, and his testimony was the testimony of God. That carries the whole purpose and thought of Christian ministry. The Apostle must fill his mind with Divine messages, he must read the prophets, and peruse the life of Christ, and study the ministry of the Cross, and only tell what he himself has been told. Preachers have nothing to say ; they are unfaithful when they utter any word of their own, then they steal an honour, and arrest public attention with thoughts that are not worth taking out of the dust. The sermon is nothing, the text is everything : but were this theory proceeded upon, all Corinthian congregations would be dissolved. "Excellency of speech or of wisdom" has its subtle temptations. There is a profanity of sentence-making, there is a blasphemy of rhetoric. We do not want the vessel, we want the life-giving fluid which it holds. It is not the goblet that saves us, it is the blood. Has he time to think out of what vessel he drinks who is dying of thirst ? Does he take up the goblet and ask questions as to its age, as to its decoration, as to its symbolism ? He sees not the vessel, he lays hold of it and drains it, because he is conscious of a fatal thirst. But the Corinthians in all this have themselves to blame that so much attention is paid to the vessel. Their criticisms are flippant, superficial, profane. There are not wanting those who speak about a "finished style" ; the heavens frown on them that they should talk such folly and madness within presence of the Cross. The Apostle Paul, therefore, comes before all Christian ages as the exemplar of Christian apostolicity and Christian ministry.

The strength of the temptation may be in some degree measured by the strength of the resolution with which Paul encountered it. Read : "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Men have to gird themselves for great occasions ; sometimes men have to go into training for a long time, that they may strengthen muscle and fibre, and flesh and bone, so as to endure the conflict well, and come out of it triumphantly. No man can know how long the Apostle was in coming to this determination. His, indeed, was a swiftly acting mind ; he did not hover about a subject, but

fell upon it with energetic precision. Yet we have the Apostle here in various moods; trembling like a leaf wind-shaken, and standing like a rock. He was a manifold man. He cried in public, and in public he thundered. The one thing he determined to know was the all-inclusive thing. He was not content to know about Jesus Christ. Many persons are fascinated by that theme who are not Christians. There is nothing less acceptable to the Son of God than a compliment paid to his character, if the payment of that tribute be not followed by the imitation of his Spirit and the reproduction of his life. Many persons preach about Jesus Christ who never preach him. The whole difficulty lies in that word "about." They are within sight of him, they have a clear vision of his personality, his figure, his colour, his height, his bulk, his historical relations; they write learned essays about him, they paint verbal pictures of the Messiah, they turn his miracles and mighty signs and wonders into poesy, into idyllic incidents. They do not preach Christ. Sometimes they preach Christ best who never name him. Were a minister to preach upon the forgiveness of sins, he would be termed a moralist, a legalist; whereas, he is preaching the very agony of the Cross of Christ. No man can preach the forgiveness of a foe without preaching Christ, yet Christ's name may not be mentioned. We are humiliated and disgraced by bigots, who call that preaching Christ which simply names the Name without penetrating to the inner meaning, thought, and purpose of the Son of God. You cannot reconcile two enemies without preaching Christ. He who does Christ's work preaches Christ himself. Could we persuade the Church to accept this definition what charity would be developed, what nobleness, what consciousness of one man supplying what is lacking in the ministry of another, and what a grasp of the whole ministry we should secure! There must be some strong men willing to live on begged bread until they can drill this doctrine into the stony heart of a nominal but insufferable Church. Why was the Apostle not satisfied with knowing about Jesus Christ? Because Jesus Christ may be but a historical name, one of many, the brightest point in a series of brilliant points; what the Apostle would know was Jesus Christ "crucified," that word bearing all the emphasis of his meaning. Many persons fall short

of the Cross; they can witness the performance of any number of miracles, and be appropriately amazed; they can listen to any number of discourses and say, "How wonderful!" All this amounts to nothing: unless a man be crucified with Christ, on Christ's Cross, he is none of Christ's. But this would cut down the Church by millions. All the proud people would have to go; all the self-satisfied people would be scattered, while all persons who have little theories and religious inventions and pious tricks of their own would have to be dispersed. Who is sufficient for these things? The man who thinks he has about him one rag of respectability would have to be driven forth, and Jesus Christ would be left with a few broken hearts, a few sinners having one only cry, "God be merciful unto me a sinner." Numerically, the Church would be small; energetically, spiritually, dynamically, it would be omnipotent. He who erases the word "crucified" erases the words "Jesus Christ."

How was the Apostle with the Corinthians? He explains his spirit and his attitude in pathetic terms:—"And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." What a various character was Paul! Hear him on one occasion when they tell him that bonds and imprisonment await him in every city; he says, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God." Then you describe him as a mighty north wind tearing down the valleys of time, never to be resisted or turned back. At Corinth he was in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. This was not all bodily infirmity; there was a touch of another sensation in this mysterious experience. It would be curious to range on the one side all the heroic utterances of Paul, when he is giant conqueror, not a whit behind the chiefest of the Apostles; and then to put down on the opposite page all the times of his depression, when he needed cheering words from angels and from God himself; for no man so much needed cheering as the Apostle Paul. Peter had better spirits. Collate the passages in which God is obliged, so to say, by the constraint of love to come to Paul and say, "Fear not." Listen to Paul as he

says: "There stood by me the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul." To no man in the Church was that word so frequently addressed; yet at other times he seemed to carry the whole Church by his strength, to hold the whole flock of Christ within the fold of his heart. Poor is the life that has only one line in it! How stricken with the disease of monotony the soul that can only sing one tune! Sometimes the Apostle could only rebuke vanity by what might appear to be excessive humility on his own side. The Apostle had to create an atmosphere in which it was impossible for any man to speak above his breath, lest he should convict himself of ostentation and self-idolatry. The mystery wrought by this apostolic action ended in a consciousness on the part of the Corinthians that they must not display themselves, if he, the greatest, was so tremulous, so self-restrained, and so consciously and lovingly subject to the chastening of the Divine Spirit. The only way in which certain blatant persons can be put down is by the silence of the men who are attacked. Paul could only rebuke the vanity of the Church by exhibiting himself in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. For not one man amongst them did he care one iota, so far as that man's intelligence or power was concerned. Every man in that Church acquired his quality and his value by his attachment to One greater than himself. This was a studied depreciation; this was a calculated abasement.

How does the Apostle describes his preaching? He says: "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom": I never made a sermon: to make a sermon! why, that is to make an idol, a graven image, a shape in clay; and to breathe into its nostrils my own dying breath, why that were waste of life: I simply said, Thou Blessed One of the Cross, put into my heart what has to be uttered by my tongue; tell me thy word, and I will go and speak it, though every man be a lion, and every town a den of lions. "Enticing words of man's wisdom:" small inventions of man's mind; man's answers to the puzzle of the universe; man's renewed attempt to answer an unanswerable enigma; man's profession of being able to arrange the little pieces of the universe so as to get the shape of the whole; man correcting himself to-day for what he said



yesterday, and begging the pardon of an audience whilst he retracts an assertion and replaces it with another which is equally devoid of truth. What we want is the burning heart, the burning tongue, the self that has no self, the heroic egotism that in the very grandeur of its passion forgets the pettiness of its individuality.

How, then, did Paul preach? "In demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." The converts might be few, but they should be good. No man should be able to say that his minister was not present, and therefore he could not defend his own religion; no one should be driven to say, If you want to know what I believe, consult my preacher: let every man have his own conviction wrought in him by God the Holy Ghost. Faith that stands in the wisdom of men may be overturned by the very energy that created it. Any man who accepts Christ as the result of controversial study may reject Christ to-morrow because some mightier controversialist has undertaken to teach a contrary doctrine. We must come to Christ through the heart. It is not the intellect that receives Christ, but when the heart lays hold upon him it takes another heart greater still to extract the infinite benediction. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." It is because the heart is not touched that we have bigotry, sectarianism, separation one from another, so that one saith, It is so, and another saith, It is not so. Men cannot be reconciled in opinion; they can be one in the ocean of love. But would not this be mere emotion? I answer, No. We should be careful how we admit the existence of any such thing as mere emotion. There may be an animal emotion, but the emotion that is spoken of in connection with the Cross of Christ is a soul-melting passion, a fire that brings into one all the various elements of life, fusing them together, and representing them in outward action as a unity strong and indissoluble.

The Apostle gathers himself together, and says, "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect." That is to say, we can be wiser than we appear to be: whilst I was in Corinth I taught the alphabet; I could have spoken a fluent literature that would have amazed and distressed you all; but wisdom is



not to be spoken in the presence of children ; we speak to children in children's language ; we speak the wisdom of God among them that are perfect, them that are strong, them that are spiritually-minded ; men who can handle a mystery without taking the bloom off it ; men who can see the meaning of a parable without being bewildered by its accidentals ; men who see the spirit is greater than the word, the letter, the form. There be those clever people who examine the robe that has been brought out for the shoulders of the prodigal, and who take up his shoes and examine them, and take off the ring that they may look at it ; and there be those who see no robe, nor shoes, nor ring, but join the infinite gladness because a soul has been raised from the dead. Do not waste the parables, the mysteries, the symbols of God ; they teach some inner core-truth, some heart thought ; seize them, and as for the drapery let it flow as it may, for God is often redundant in his gift of cloud and colour, flowers and music.

Paul is very ironical in the after parts of his discourse. It is a beautiful and profitable intellectual study to follow this man in all the gamut of his intellectual action. He looks at the Corinthians with a countenance charged with expressions they can never understand. He speaks "the wisdom of God in a mystery," in a parable, in a concealed way, in a way that is only half disclosed ; "even the hidden wisdom," the wisdom that rises, floats, passes, falls out of view, returns, shines with added glory, and then dissolves in added clouds and darkness. Then the Apostle says, "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Where is it so written ? Some say in an Apocryphal book. But that is a poor answer ; ten thousand other things may be written in Apocryphal books which we have never read. But it is written—where ? Did any one try to find out whether this passage is inscribed in the Old Testament ? We take it for granted it is written because Paul says it is written ; there we are poor Papists, there we are miserable idolaters ; Paul says it is written, and therefore we accept it, and never inquire where—the fact being it is not written. We should study Paul's method of

quoting the Bible. When Paul seeks to establish a given doctrinal point he will give you, as it were, chapter and verse; at other times he will give you, not chapter and verse, but the whole Bible. It is lawful so to quote the Bible as to lose all sense of chapter and verse. Chapter and verse are not Divine inventions, they are not human inventions—we will not press the inquiry farther. We have been ruined by chapter and verse. We may be biblical when we have no text to quote. "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." When did he say so? Never, and yet he never said anything else. If you ask for chapter and verse, then Jesus Christ never said these words; but if you ask for Jesus Christ's teaching you cannot have a finer, more suggestive declaration of the doctrine and purpose of his life. So "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." You find an echo of this in Isaiah, in more places than one, but not in this connection, and not in this relation; and yet the whole Old Testament simply says this. When you have read through from Genesis to Malachi, you might say the whole is comprehended in one saying, namely, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Talk about the finality of the Book! it begins but never ends. Thus this is the teaching of Paul when he says: "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." There is a continual spiritual communication going on between God and the believer. We know many things by the spirit we do not know by the letter. The ear of corn has outlived the seed out of which it sprang; the flower expresses the secret of the root, and the fragrance of the flower. What shall be said of that? always giving itself away, shaking out its blessing on the wind, so that, though rich men wall in their flower-gardens, the fragrance comes over the wall and blesses the humblest little child that plays on the road. Dear little child, sniff this gift of odour, by-and-by thou shalt have a whole paradise.

Have we the spirit of interpretation and sympathy, the spirit that sees afar off? If so, we are rich, and we are never alone.

## 1 Corinthians ii. 2.

"I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified."

### A SUPREME PURPOSE IN LIFE.

WHAT does this mean? Perhaps you will reply that a child can answer that inquiry. Let us try first whether a man can. Say, then, what does it mean? You may answer, It means that the Apostle Paul in going to Corinth had made up his mind not to listen to anything, but to preach or teach or converse regarding Jesus Christ and him crucified. He would not speak about weather, or health, or commerce, or nature; he would close his ears against all minor topics and all meaner appeals, and would listen to nothing from sunrise to sundown but Jesus Christ and him crucified. You wonder that any one should ask what words so obvious in their significance could mean.

First then, they do not mean that. It is an awkward criticism for you. They mean largely the contrary of that. Where is the child, then, that you set in the midst of us at the first to answer the inquiry, What does this mean? Let us try to get the real meaning into our minds and hearts. It will revolutionise life; it will centralise, and dignify, and sacredly utilise all the elements, emotions, tumults, and conflicts of life. Let the paraphrase stand thus: In coming to Corinth, the only one thing I had made up my mind about was that, whatever else there might be to see and to do, and to arrange, I would fix my mind and heart on Jesus Christ and him crucified. This determination was the only determination the Apostle had formed in his mind; other objects he had left to be considered within the lines of the occasion. If there was weather to be talked about, he would refer to it; if there was health to be inquired about, he would

inquire about it; if nature revealed some apocalypse of beauty which challenged the attention of the eyes, he would turn his vision upon the revelation of God. The only thing I have made up my mind about, says the Apostle, is to know Jesus Christ and him crucified; upon that my mind is fixed; that is certain, that is unchangeable; whatever else may happen, this is the only thing I have at present made up my mind about. So other objects are not excluded; the Apostle is not a mere fanatic; Paul does not say that he will do nothing whilst at Corinth but talk about Jesus Christ and him crucified; as a matter of fact, he did a great many things at Corinth, and yet everything he did is perfectly consistent with this determination. The picture is that of a man who has made up his mind to one thing; he may do fifty other things, he does not know what he will do with the other subjects; he is certain and fixed upon this one thing, and all else shall be ruled by it as gravitation rules the motions of the worlds. We perish for want of a dominating thought. We cannot get the arch together because we have no keystone. The two parts would gladly approach one another, but they cannot, because the keystone, that wondrous wedge that binds the distant and the separate, is wanting. Many a life is ruined for want of a keystone. Many a man is wandering about the world doing nothing because he is destitute of a sovereign purpose. If he could make up his mind about any one thing, that one thing being worthy of life, his whole course would be elevated, and sublimated. That is the Apostle's position.

Take the matter from a lower point of view. Say a man shall make up his mind to go to London, or to Paris to make money. He says, in effect, On that point I am certain; what I may do about other matters I cannot tell: I am going to London or to Paris to make money, and everything has got to bend to that. Will you not look at some of the museums? I may. Will you not run into the galleries of art? Possibly; all depends. Depends upon what? Upon how such things affect my main object, which is to make money. That, in the religious sense, is just the meaning of the Apostle. Will you not look at the beautiful sculpture to be found in the famous city? Possibly; all depends. Depends upon what? Depends upon the success of my mission,

which is Jesus Christ and him crucified. I will certainly look on the rocks that man has not chiselled, I may look on the stone he has partially spoiled. May you not hear some of the famed orators of Greece? I may; it all depends. Depends upon what? Upon the opportunities which are offered to me, or created by me, of proclaiming Jesus Christ and him crucified. Will you not call upon your friends, and speak with them on the subjects of the day? I may; it all depends. Depends upon what? Upon how I get along with this subject; that must rule everything; the one thing I have made up my mind about is to know nothing, save Jesus Christ and him crucified; everything else must wait.

Now we understand the text. Paul's method was consistent; he always worked upon this plan. Once he said, "This one thing I do." How often is that passage misunderstood. The Apostle was not doing this one thing as the only thing he was doing, but he was doing this as the supreme motive and purpose and object of his life, and that supreme purpose ruled all minor things. Often we are exhorted by the apostolic motto to concentration of mind, saying, This one thing I do, and nothing else. The Apostle never said so. He said, Whatever else I may be doing, I am certain about doing this particular thing, namely, pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus; I may be doing innumerable other things, all partaking of the quality of this supreme purpose, but this—this—I am certain about. Where did Paul learn this great and gracious doctrine? Where he learned everything of the nature of Christian doctrine and Christian philosophy. He learned it in the school of Jesus Christ. Does Jesus Christ lay down this rule of supremacy of purpose? Yes, he does. Where? In these words:—"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things"—trifles, baubles for children to play with—"shall be added unto you." Have a supreme purpose. Every man should have a supreme purpose in life; it will give definiteness to all his processes of thought and action. How many aimless people there are in the world! They awake in the morning without a plan, they make no programme, they draw up no scheme; they may be east or west, and it is just possible they may be north or south; they are driving without



reins, without whip, and without aim. They think the horses, which they call their impulses, know the road. What does all this come to? To ruin, to disappointment, to chagrin, to despair. Whenever the Apostle Paul awoke he knew that what he had to do that day was to proclaim Jesus Christ and him crucified, to make these great histories and doctrines clearer and clearer to human comprehension. Whatever else the day might ask at his hands that tribute must be paid.

Such a purpose determines the tone of a man's life. Life is not a question of separate actions. Life, in its higher interpretation, means tone, atmosphere, unexpressed but mighty music; a quality not to be named or traced etymologically. A man cannot get rid of his supreme purpose. The avaricious man has avarice painted upon his face. He cannot cover it with a smile, he cannot hide it with a frown; by many a trickster's grimace he seeks to rub out the signature, but there it is, and that projecting truth-telling chin. All his questions have avarice at the base, avarice at the top, and avarice in the middle line. He is asking about affairs, possibilities, markets; he fingers everything with the hands of a bargain-maker: what he can get out of it, is his purpose. The dreamer cannot hide his supreme purpose. He wants to create new heavens and a new earth; he longs to take the stars to pieces to see where the light comes from; he knows he saw an angel on that white-thorn hedge; he is sure that the spirit of some seer or singer was in that bird's note—"Did you not hear it?" he says, "*I did.*" Dear soul! the world is the sweeter for his dreaming and singing: go on! The Apostle could not hide the supreme purpose of his life, nor did he ever seek to do so. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth: . . . I count not my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus: . . . I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." Heroic soul! almost the Son of God!

A supreme purpose of this kind always ennobles character.



The whole range of thought is elevated. Some minds have no mountain chains running through them. They are flat ; they are of the nature of table-land ; they are by no means either useless or despicable, they have their own utility. Other minds are Alpine ; they reach and stretch, they uplift themselves as if to find their right place in the very noonday of the sun. He who has Christ living in him lives an uplifted or elevated life : all his contemplations are high, wide, radiant, noble, beneficent ; all things are new. He may never preach a sermon in any formal sense, yet he never ceases to preach in a vital significance.

In this subject chosen by the Apostle Paul there is neither poverty nor monotony. This subject never runs out ; it is a perennial fountain. All the little cataracts take a summer holiday : we do not know where they have gone, they are never there when we want them, they take their holiday when we take ours ; we are welcome to look at the stones which they run over after snow and rain ; if it will do us the least good in the world to see where they do gambol, we may spend all day in the torrent-bed, but the torrent itself is gone. Niagara never takes a holiday. Great Niagara ! Who that has stood behind it has not said, Surely in a few hours that cataract must have run itself out ; surely we shall not find it here in the morning. Yet it gallops with the centuries ; it foams and plunges as if God had set upon it the seal of eternity. Poor is that symbol, though one of the best we can at the moment find, by which to represent the eternal rush of the redeeming, ennobling, sanctifying influence poured upon the world by the Son of God. Wherever there is anything beautiful, Christ and Christ crucified is there ; wherever you find anything that is really progressive, you find Christ and him crucified ; wherever you hear true singing, the joy, the gladness of the heart ruled by reason, inspired by hope, you find Jesus Christ and him crucified. You find that great subject in the museum, in the art gallery, on the death-bed, in the cradle, everywhere. Without the crucified Christ the world could not live ; its foundations are laid upon him, and those foundations are but the beginnings of pinnacles, for until the topstone is brought on God's creation is not finished.

Mark what distinctiveness this gave to Paul's personality and ministry. He found his subject in his character. You knew him to be a man of prayer, a man of God ; you could not be long with him before he took off the key from his girdle and opened some new world of vision, some larger sphere of hope and service and rest. If you let him alone one moment he was at the Cross. You might detain him on minor subjects if you solicitously urged him to give his opinion about them, as about life upon the earth, and marriage, and service, and duty, as we define those terms ; but the moment your solicitousness took its finger from him he was at Calvary. You could not keep him back from the altar ; having been there he would abide there. He might accept a tent for a night, but his abiding sanctuary was built on a Golgotha.

How easy it is to see a perversion of this purpose, or an undue limitation of its range. How easy it would be to say, This kind of purpose would fit well apostles and preachers, evangelists and ministers, or Christians of leisure who had yielded themselves to the charms of a contemplative life. I will answer you—you are wrong ; you are doing injustice to the genius of the history and the doctrine. This singleness or loftiness of purpose is just as possible to the humblest man of business as to the mightiest man of eloquence, or the most favoured child of contemplation and holy dream. Often we hear it said "Business must be looked after ; business must be looked after in the spirit of the business ; we wish we had more time for religious contemplation : far are we from ignoring the claims of the Cross, but we must leave its deeper study, and its fuller unfoldment of meaning to men who are consecrated to sacred leisure." You are fundamentally wrong, you are wrong at the core. Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ crucified, are not subjects for contemplation. They are the most active subjects in the world. They are the factors of civilisation, they are the sovereign thought of progress. Every man may do his business, whatever it be, in the spirit of Jesus Christ and him crucified. That is what the Apostle desires to have us all attain. He would have us show pity and do justice and obey the golden rule, and it is impossible to do these things apart from Jesus Christ and him crucified. Here is the doctrine

that needs prominence, enforcement, and practical glorification. A man's wages ought to be earned and paid in the spirit of Jesus Christ and him crucified. This is not a sentiment to be set among the stars and telescopically surveyed; this is a rule of conduct, this is the inspiration of life, this is the meaning of all true things. We cannot get some people to understand this. We shall never get right by socialistic theories, anarchical programmes, and a certain vulgar power of befooling the trustful classes: we can only get right by Jesus Christ and him crucified. Of course, a proposition of this kind would be received with execration by socialists and anarchists of the baser sort. He who proclaimed this doctrine would be scoffed at with certain derisive epithets, and would be honoured by the brand of certain contemptuous criticism; yet the preacher, the teacher, the Christian, must never fold his flag as if in defeat; he must unfurl it and say still more sweetly and still more loudly, The world's only hope is in Jesus Christ and him crucified.

What have we seen amongst persons who would undertake to work the economics of the age on the basis of other theories? We have seen tyranny of the worst description, selfishness that had been saturated in the very pools of corruption, narrow-mindedness that could not take in the whole of any question, an obstinacy mistaken for firmness, and a recklessness which was characterised as splendid generalship. Let us have justice on all sides, let us hear every man's case, be he great or small; the beggar in the ditch shall have all the benefactions that justice can confer upon him, and the man who thinks for the world and guides its affairs shall not be denied justice because he has acquired eminence. Do not listen to the men that want to merely mechanise life, and rule it by schedule and stipulation: the only real security of life, joy, progress, and heaven you will find in Jesus Christ and him crucified, when properly interpreted. Christ will put all business right; Christ will pay every labourer his wages; Christ will sanctify the millions of the capitalist, and keep the richest man modest and humble within the environment of his life. The world can never be pacified, the classes can never be united or reconciled, the balance of society can never be properly established, except in connection with Jesus Christ and

him crucified. This is not a mere doctrine, a section of metaphysical inquiry, a dreamy sentiment that only leisurely minds can contemplate; this is the real force and the real secret of life and action.

The subject was not only Jesus Christ, but Jesus Christ crucified. Many persons would get rid of the last word if they could. Paul never sought to get rid of it; he magnified it, he glorified it. He did not preach Jesus Christ the socialist, Jesus Christ the theorist, Jesus Christ the wonder, Jesus Christ either a prospective or a retrospective Aristotle, or Plato, or Socrates. Paul preached morning, noon, and night, Christ on the Cross, Christ crucified, Christ shedding his blood that men might not die. We can make no gospel out of any other word than "crucified." There are theorists who show some other aspects of Christ's sacrifice; nor are they to be derided or undervalued; they have a right motive, and some would say a right conception, and they are to be honoured for their earnestness as students: but we cannot move the world without the Crucified in another, in a deeper, in a more tragic sense. Speaking of my own ministry in this place and elsewhere, I growingly feel that power can attach to it only in proportion as it is inspired by the pathos, not of a moral example only, but of a real personal sacrifice. What it means I cannot tell: love is not to be scheduled, the Spirit of God is not to be caged in by formal or theological bars: higher than heaven, who can reach it? wider than the horizon, who may lay his fingers upon it? We can only say concerning God's rule, His mercy endureth for ever:—

"In the Cross of Christ I glory,  
Towering o'er the wrecks of time:  
All the light of sacred story  
Gathers round its head sublime."

It is not a thing to be explained in words, or to be defended exhaustively in mere terms; it is a passion to be felt, it is an inspiration to be accepted, it is a mystery on which we may lay down our aching lives as a little child lays down its weariness on its mother's heart.

## 1 Corinthians ii. 14.

"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him."

### SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT.

I WISH to show, by analogies and illustrations known to everybody, the reasonableness of the doctrine which is thus laid down by the Apostle Paul. There is nothing here which is not commonly acknowledged, and insisted on in the everyday walks of life. To show this may be a great help to some minds; to those, for example, who suppose that where there is no religion there is no mystery, and consequently that, if we could get clear of religion, we should get clear of all mystery. I believe that the true interpreter of God—whenever he shall arise—will be able to show that what is distinctively known as the Christian religion is only more mysterious because it is more sublime than any other part of the economy of life and nature. The one great mystery is God himself. All other mysteries are as shadows thrown by that burning light. Interpretation—the power of seeing things as they are—is not a question of culture so much as of sympathy and insight. Sympathy and insight cannot be taught in the schools. The highest gifts cannot be given to men through the medium of books; so, unless a man have the hearing ear and seeing eye as the direct gifts of God, he never can be taught to be a profound and sure interpreter. Right answers to hard questions have never been suggested by flesh and blood; they have always been given to the Peters of the world by the Father which is in heaven. God gives us the spirit of discernment, the power of seeing spiritual realities and relations. It is not a natural endowment common to the whole human species: it is a distinct and special gift of God. "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. God



hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit ; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." And yet it has strangely come to pass in the study of religious problems, that some men have asserted the sufficiency of unaided reason. Strange, because the very men have in less important inquiries gladly availed themselves of all the instruments, mediums, and helps which inventive genius has supplied. I wish to show the inconsistency of the reasoning of such men ; that they leave their common-sense behind them when they enter into the consideration of the elements which constitute profoundly true and successful religious inquiry.

Here, for example, is a large, brilliant diamond. You look at the stone, and it pleases you by its wondrous whiteness and lustre. You admire it, you praise it very highly. You say, "This stone is without fault of any kind—a most beautiful and precious gem." The lapidary places in your hand a magnifying glass of great power, and bids you look at the centre of the stone. You look. The lapidary inquires what you see, and you reply, "Why, there is a black spot at its very centre ! I did not see that without the glass. To the naked eye the stone looked perfectly white—entirely without flaw or fault ; and yet now that I look at the stone through the glass, why, I wonder that I could not have seen so great a speck as that !" The lapidary says the naked eye cannot receive it, neither can it know it, because it is microscopically discerned. And nobody arises to contest the reasoning of the lapidary ; no man ventures to say to him, "Sir, you have introduced a most painful mystery into human thought and human inquiry." Such people are rather glad that a medium has been supplied by which the most hidden fault can be brought to light.

Yonder are two shining surfaces. You look at both of them and pronounce them intensely brilliant. You say, "There must be great fire there, otherwise such a glowing surface could not have presented itself." A scientific man who overhears you says, "One of those surfaces is not light at all,—has not light in itself." And you, a man of independent judgment, a free-thinker and noble-minded inquirer, turn round upon him and tell him,



circuitously but yet virtually, that he's a fool : can't you believe your own eyes ? what were your eyes given to you for, if you could not see such evident realities before you ? And you treat the scientific man with contempt and disdain. "Now," he says, "just look through this instrument, will you ?" And he brings to you the polariscope, teaches you the use of that instrument. And when you have looked according to his directions, you turn to him and beg his pardon for having so rudely contradicted him : you say that you never could have supposed that the thing was as it has really been proved to be ; you could not have seen that the one surface was primary light and the other was but reflected light, until you looked at both surfaces through the crystals of the polariscope. And now the scientific man says to you, "The naked eye cannot receive it, neither know it, because it is polariscopically discerned." You thank him as a philosopher ; you are obliged to him as a discoverer.

And yonder are two men who have undertaken a mineral survey. It has been supposed by some people that there is iron in the field which these men are now traversing. One of the men is a mineralogist, a man of science, who knows the limitations of his condition, and who consequently avails himself of instruments which science has supplied. The other is a grand man, who believes that if he cannot find things out with his naked eyes and his naked fingers, that nothing can be found out or shall be found out. Not at all a bigot, observe. A man of latitudinarian spirit, of all-encompassing and all-hopeful charity ; belongs to no sect, to no flag, to no banner, with no passwords, and does not believe in anything that is dogmatic or defined. He goes over the field, does this latter man—he soon goes over it. Men of that kind have nothing to arrest them on the way ; it is a pity they were not winged, that they might get away sooner. Having gone over the field, he says, "There is no iron there." But the scientific man is walking slowly over the same ground, holding in his hand a little box, a little crystal box, walking slowly, watching the instrument that is enclosed in that box. Presently the needle dips. The man stops there, and says, "In this place there is iron." Can you see it ? No. Can you touch it ? No. But in this place he repeats, "I tell you

there is iron!" He walks on again. The needle is perfectly steady: yard after yard the needle is perfectly steady and still, but suddenly the needle dips. As the finger of God it points out to men the riches of the earth. The other man has gone home to tell everybody that there is no iron in that field, and of course, being an independent, free-minded, experienced man, he is instantly believed by every one. The other man says, "There is iron in that field, and in my judgment it will repay digging for." The scientific man then digs for iron and finds it, and then turns round to hear what men have to say about him and his discoveries. He says, "The naked eye, the unassisted faculty, cannot receive it, neither know it, for it is magnetically discerned." We then say that he is very clever, and tardily yield him the confidence which he has so richly deserved.

Look at this ruddy-faced boy. You cannot walk out with this boy forty yards but he challenges you to leap a five-barred gate, or to have a game at throwing stones at something, or leaping over ditches about twelve feet wide; and you, not being so boyish as he is, respectfully decline the challenge, but you say, "What a vigorous lad that is! what power, what spring he has! There will be a long life there and a happy one." A scientific man comes to your house; you talk physiology. The scientific man proposes to examine this ruddy-faced boy, your companion in the field. He applies an instrument to the region of the heart, and suddenly there is a changed expression of countenance on the part of the physician. Turning aside to you he says, "This boy will never see five-and-twenty. Has he had rheumatic fever? There is valvular affection of the heart, and before he is five-and-twenty I am afraid he will be gone." Of course you disbelieve it. You saw the boy in the field vaulting a gate, leaping a ditch, throwing stones many a yard, and you cannot disbelieve your eyes,—that would be unmanly and unworthy of the independence of manhood. The doctor says, "Apply your ear to this instrument and listen for yourself." You do so, and hear an irregularity and peculiarity of beat, which you, not being a medical man, cannot understand; and yet you know that there is a discrepancy in the pulsations. The

physician says to you, "The untrained, uneducated ear cannot receive this, neither know it, because it is stethoscopically discerned." And you tardily, as in the former case, give your confidence to the adviser, and beseech him to lend you his aid under circumstances so unexpected and distressing.

Here is a piece of paper, and you hand it round to your friends, to every man amongst them, and they say, "Whatever have you handed this blank piece of paper round for? are you playing a hoax upon us? There is nothing upon this piece of paper? Have we to write something upon it?" And you take it back and say, "Is there really nothing upon the paper?" and every voice says "No, cannot we believe our own eyes? We are unanimously of opinion that there is nothing upon it." You just hold it to the fire for the space of a minute or two, and lo, it is written all over! You have developed the secret ink.

Now, in all these things, we confess our need of instruments. The unassisted faculties of nature are not enough. We must be indebted to mediums. Imagine a man who disbelieves everything he cannot see with the naked eye. Suppose that it came to pass to-morrow that everything should be taken away which cannot be read by the naked eye, or that has not been discovered by the naked eye. What will come? Shut up the heavens, for astronomy must go; and cover over the fields, for botany tells but little to the naked eye. All science, indeed, would be impoverished, insulted, degraded. Yet the man who cannot read his own mother's letter without an eye-glass insists upon reading the infinite and eternal God by his own unassisted powers,—declares that if he cannot settle this great question by natural reason, that there is nothing at all worth being settled,—says that, whatsoever is too mysterious for his natural understanding is but worthy of insult, degradation, and contempt. I charge him, in God's house and before God's face, with insulting his own common-sense and contradicting the highest experiences of mankind.

The same principle may be illustrated in spheres where instruments are not required. Here are two men listening to

the same piece of music. The one man is inspired, enraptured, thrilled, and says mentally, "I would this might go on for ever! The sweetness, the purity of that wondrous tone, let it never cease! I would abide here constantly." The other man is saying mentally, "I wonder when they will be done? it seems a long time!" He looks at the programme with weary eyes, and mentally resolves that that shall be the last occasion of the kind when he will be there. The best ear cannot receive these things or know them, for they are musically discerned. There are that have ears that cannot hear, and eyes that cannot see. The one man, the musical man, would be pained, really tormented, if one note were the thousandth part of a shade wrong, he would feel it intensely, it would go right through him like a spear. But all the notes might be wrong so far as the other man was concerned. If there was only noise enough, he would think it was not so very bad after all.

Here are two men looking at the same picture. The one man is chained to the spot: it is to him an enigma, a mystery, a wonder, and a delight; he has never seen such combinations before; he has never before thrilled under such wondrous effects. A man behind him with a thick shilling catalogue says that he does not see very much in that, and hastens on to something that has got superficies, no matter what the superficies may be: only let it be extensive enough. Paint for such men with a broom!

Now, the application of all these instances is to the things of God as accessible to the spirit of man. The things of God are not naturally discerned. "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not." There are blind minds as well as blind eyes. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." This is perfectly reasonable. If a man contends that mystery begins with the Bible, he knows not the world he is living in, or the elements by which he is surrounded. In the light of these reflections we may see the adaptation of the method of the Gospel to our human condition. What has God done in the matter of revelation? God has condescended

to have a book written for us. Just as you condescended, when you were a long way from home, to sit up one whole hour to print about six lines in large hand for that little child of yours at home. And you were never so much a man, as when you were so much a child. God comes to us, knowing the dumbness and blindness of his creatures, and sets everything before us he possible can set, to appeal, in the first instance, to our lowest faculties; and then brings us on from that point until sanctuaries are no more wanted, printed Bibles are no more wanted, sun and moon are dismissed from their spheres, institutionalism goes down in spirituality—the Lamb is the light, and God is the temple.

We may see, also, the reasonableness of Divine dependence in reading the Gospel. There are many things, as we have just shown, which cannot be read without instruments and mediums. God comes and says to us, "I have something to say to you, which you never could hear by your own unaided faculties; but I will give you the faculty, I will give you the capacity to receive, and that capacity to its utmost limits." I say this is not a mystery that is opposed to reason, though it may be a mystery which is above reason. We also see in the light of these illustrations the sublimity of the truths announced by the gospel. Instruments will read the works, but instruments cannot read the Word. Only God can reveal himself. What man knoweth the things of man, save the spirit of man which is in him?—even so, mark the connecting link—the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. It is thus put upon reasonable grounds. As with men so with God. You cannot read the things that are in your brother's mind: no man can read the things that are in your mind, you alone can reveal them. The Apostle carries up the argument until he shows its bearing upon the infiniteness, the depth, the wonderfulness, the whole Godhead of God.

As ministers we are not to be discouraged and driven back in our godly work, because some people cannot understand us, and others say we are trifling with their reason or insulting their common-sense. Take it as a matter of fact, there will always be



men in the world to whom your best preaching will be foolishness; simply because they have not the spiritual faculty of taking hold of what you are saying. Now, do we wish to have this discernment? "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." Do not expect to see all things at once—the whole breadth and lustre of the Godhead at once: begin at a little point. In the first place you may, in spiritual things as in material, see men as trees walking, dim outlines, flitting shadows; but do not despise the twilight! If we already have this discernment, then surely to him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance. Inspiration is not a fixed quantity, it is a variable quantity,—we may increase the volume of our inspiration by diligently, lovingly and patiently waiting upon God. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings will God ordain praise. The first shall be last, and last shall be first. And by things that are not, will God secure great results in the world.

Do not let us therefore lose our present insight, our present power of interpretation, our present power of discernment and appreciation. Let us grow. We can only grow by prolonged intercourse with God. He who gives his days to study and his nights to prayer shall see heaven opened, and his whole life shall be a Jacob's dream: he will never, never miss that wonderful ladder which connects the worlds; that marvellous staircase of light up which the angels go, and in going bid us follow on. It doth not yet appear what we shall be. Thy home is with the humble, Lord! Have we a right spirit? God will not say anything to people who are boastful of their own wisdom, and who glorify themselves in the light of their own reason; but he never ceases talking to the child-heart that says in the dark midnight and the bright noonday, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."



## PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we bless thee that the foundation is laid, laid in Zion, and that there is a corner stone, elect, precious, tried, a sure foundation : may we take heed how we build upon it, that our building may be in some measure worthy of the foundation upon which it rests. Quicken our eyes that we may see precisely what we are doing, what stones we are choosing, and how we are laying them. Take away from us the spirit of indolence and foolish trustfulness, and work in us the spirit of industry and keen watchfulness, that so we may do all things according to thy law, and thy will may be glorified in our industry. Thou hast so appointed our life as to make us all builders : may we take heed how we build : may it be our life care, may we think of nothing else, may we build for God, for eternity. Help us in all the toil, tell us that the day will soon be done, and that therefore, whatsoever our hand findeth to do, we should do it with our might, and therefore we should dry our tears because the toil will be followed by ineffable rest. If we have built aught in life that can stand the fire, the praise be God's ; thou didst teach us how to build, thou didst show us what to choose ; not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be all the praise. Amen.

### 1 Corinthians iii. 1-9.

1. And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.

2. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat : for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.

3. For ye are yet carnal : for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men ?

4. For while one saith, I am of Paul ; and another, I am of Apollos ; are ye not carnal ?

5. Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man ?

6. I have planted, Apollos watered ; but God gave the increase.

7. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth ; but God that giveth the increase.

8. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one : and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.

9. For we are labourers together with God : ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

### GOD'S FELLOW-WORKMEN.

HOW wonderfully the tone of this wonderful man changes as he addresses the Church at Corinth. It is a dramatic study even, if it be nothing else ; as a piece of literature it

might arrest the attention of inquisitive and literary men. Paul addresses the Corinthians in the first instance as if they were everything that could be wished; and then he takes them to pieces bone by bone, and plucks off every feather, and asks them to look at themselves, and be ashamed of themselves; and in the very midst of all this pastoral desolation he tells them that they are the temple of the Holy Ghost. The whole method is Pauline, irregular, abrupt, sometimes violent, and then counterbalancing its violence by such tenderness as was never seen in woman. There is no mistaking this man's style; to read it is to walk over acres of rocks, miles of great boulder stones, coming every now and then upon large green places through which silver rills are running, and over which birds are singing, as if detained by unusual beauty.

He first speaks of himself in humbling terms. Before he comes to this tug he will lie down at the feet of the people whom he is going to rebuke. Perhaps, said he, that is the best way; I want to speak to these people as I never spoke to any other people in all my ministry; if I stand up, my attitude may be taken as expressive of self-consciousness, haughtiness, defiance; I will therefore lie down on the ground at their feet, and speak with that peculiar timidity which is the best consciousness of real might and power. "I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom. . . . I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom." That was the condition of the preacher. In the third chapter he turns right round upon them and says, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual." He had gained his standing-ground, he had conciliated his audience, he had prepared a highway for the Lord. He was a hundred men. We speak sometimes of imitating the style of this man or of that, and we are obliged to inquire which style, because the men spoken about have a hundred styles, they have all styles, they have the keys of the kingdom—a great key that only a strong hand can turn, and a little key that a child could carry, but that opens, as if in oil, locks that preserve countless, inestimable treasures. Paul is in his mixed style. One sentence is a Bible,

having Genesis in it and Revelation; then in another sentence he stands as a suppliant might stand, and asks to be allowed to speak: through all this humiliation he will make his way, and at the last we shall see him with the old port, his voice rich with all its tones, and his attitude vindicated as the pastor-soldier, the mother-judge, the pitying critic: contradictions to the ear, but reconciliations musical to the heart.

“And I, brethren”: why these apologetic terms, why these conciliatory words? Why make quite sure about the brotherhood when he is going to tear it to pieces? He will insist upon brotherhood. In all this argument he insists upon the unity of the Church. That indeed is his foundation principle; he will sacrifice all accidental circumstances to that grand doctrine, namely, the Church is one: one architect, one builder, one Lord, one owner: under that great doctrinal wheel objections are ground to powder. The Apostle could not speak unto the Corinthians “as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal.” The word “carnal” has no reference whatever to the flesh; it is the antithetic word to “spiritual”: the paraphrase therefore would be:—I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, as unto master minds in the kingdom, as unto those who have seen the secret of God; but as unto materialists, men who are still in the letter, men who are only groping around the door, men who have found a few elementary and alphabetic principles but have not yet entered into the mystery, the music, the liberty of the divinest literature; I have not been able to speak to you, brethren, as unto insiders, as unto those who have touched the altar and by that touch made it almost live; but as unto outsiders, men who are not a long way from the temple, men who have great interest in God’s temple, but who have not yet entered in and claimed the heritage and liberty of children. Paul, therefore, exercises discrimination; he is a critic every inch: sometimes we think he is a poet; so he is, but he penetrates, distinguishes, separates, winnows, so as to keep the wheat and the chaff apart.

The Apostle spoke unto the Corinthians “as unto babes in Christ.” How does that correspond with the introduction? “I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God

which is given you by Jesus Christ ; that in everything ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge ; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you : so that ye come behind in no gift." Do these two parts coincide ? Is this consistency ? Only those who live in the letter should ask so frivolous a question. There is an ideal Church, and there is an actual society ; there is a public conception, a public totality, and there is a mechanism that takes to pieces. There is a public health. It may be said consistently that the health of a nation is superb at the very moment when thousands of men are dying within the limits of that very nation. It may be said the public credit of the country never stood so high, and whilst the patriot is making that declaration concerning his country the key may be turned by the jailor upon such thieves as never disgraced the history of the country before. The Apostle speaking unto babes in Christ is a picture full of pathos. Under this declaration there lies that heroic egotism which never deserted the Apostle Paul. We might infer that the man who spoke thus meant that he could have addressed the Corinthians as men, he could speak to an audience of giants, he could summon the Titans of the ages and hold them in easy play by that infinite skill with which God had made him rich. Yet, as an economic householder, a wise tender-hearted pastor, he said, To-day the food must be milk, not meat, "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat." Why ? For a tender reason, for a pastor's reason—"For hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able." This great preacher considered his audience. The one thing that is forgotten by most preachers is the congregation. Paul knew that every congregation was a congregation of infants. He is the mighty preacher who goes along the line of infancy, simplicity, trustfulness ; who explains things winningly, intelligibly, who breaks the bread into little pieces, who gives the milk in spoonfuls. Only Paul had the courage to say that he was doing it. Others do it as if they were not doing it, but this man did it with avowed reasons. Then may it be true that even an apostle may not be preaching all he knows ? Certainly. May even a Paul be talking alphabetically when he could talk in the very highest literature of the Church ? There can be only one reply. How is this ? Because Paul never preached to himself ; he

preached to others; he preached to those who were behind him in every spiritual acquisition; he preached that he might gather up into his arms all who needed to be loved. This entitled him to be called what he will presently designate himself, "a wise master-builder."

Now for faithful talk, such as could not be endured in modern times, now for a speech that would dispossess a pope of his chair. "For ye are yet carnal;" ye are yet outsiders, ye are yet objective, dealing only in personalities, and frivolities, and fashions; ye are not subjective, spiritual, introspective, gifted with the vision that sees the book and reads it before it is opened. What will Paul do with such people? Dismiss them? That would not be good pastoral oversight. He will accommodate himself to them; he will say, You cannot take what I could prepare for you, but I will prepare something that you can take; you shall have milk, you shall be treated as little children. There is no reproach in childhood, it so be ye be growing children: but an infant thirty years old is a monstrosity.

Why were the Corinthians "carnal," outsiders, superficialists?—"For whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?"—Is not this what they do on the streets, in the clubs, in the ordinary social relations of Corinth? I do not hear any music in your voices, I hear only clamour, turbulence, self-assertion, party cries; you are a clique. Yet Paul would not crush them as a strong hand might crush an insect; he will reason with them, he will put interrogatively what he might have put didactically and judicially. There is a great oratorical secret in this interrogation. It was thus that Demosthenes maddened his hearers; he made them parties to his orations, there was a silent antiphony as he approached the conclusion of his appeal; he rained interrogations upon the listening Greeks until they sprang to their feet and said, "Let us fight." Paul will ask a question—"Are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" "Are ye not carnal? who then is Paul, and who is Apollos?" What does it amount to? what is the man who plants? what is the man who waters? Bethink ye, O ye childish Corinthians; you are exciting yourselves about



the wrong objects; your enthusiasm is fine, your anger is not without a touch of sublimity, your contention is sharpened sometimes into a suggestive agony: but you are exciting yourselves upon the wrong topics. What shall we say to a man who, instead of knocking at the door, has all the while been bruising his bones against the wall? Enthusiasm is nothing in itself; it acquires all its quality and all its worth from the object on which it is expended, or the inspiration to which it owes its flame and sacrifice. So to-day the Church may be very busy with all manner of councils, meetings, congresses, conferences, inter-communications; but it may all be along the wrong line and about the wrong topic, and will end in vapour.

How were the Corinthians conducting themselves? "One saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos." That was the difficulty in Corinth, the difficulty of party feeling. Partisanship is always an evil, unless restrained by very high motives and considerations. In the Church there should be no party name: in politics there may be, and to a certain extent properly, because politics are nothing; they may be represented by a feud of words, a clamour of opinions, a contention of more or less selfish interests, as politics are at present conducted: but in the Church there is a name and by that name all things are regulated, adjusted, and settled. Compare one candle with another, but when the sun rises put out both the candles; if there were no sun it would be interesting to compare one artificial light with another, and to say, I prefer this to that, but when the sun has risen and claims the whole firmament for his dominion, then all our little sparks must vanish. It is because there is a Christ in the Church that there must be no Paul in it, no Apollos, except in a secondary and subservient and collateral sense, helping assisting, contributing to the general smooth ongoing of the household, but nothing more. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos?" This is the very question that ought to make the Church ashamed of herself to-day. Paul would be lost in anger if he knew the use that is being made of his name in the Church at this moment. There is now a Paulianity. There are men who follow Paul, as they falsely suppose, who do not follow Paul's Lord. Paul simply wants to be known amongst us as a "minister,"



a servant, one who runs errands, and carries messages, and explains what his Lord wishes us to understand; he does not want to be received, as Christ but for Christ's sake. Let us take care lest we make an idol of Paul and an idol of Apollos, and lest we be quoting the Epistles instead of living upon the Gospels. Are they not one? Certainly they are, but they may be perverted in their unity, they may be misunderstood in their relation: it is because they are one that we go to the fountain, it is because they are one that we cannot be content with the stream.

Paul will not have his work ignored. He says, I have planted; my eloquent friend Apollos, to whom speaking is breathing, and whose breathing is the fragrance of the garden of the Lord, has watered; we have done the little that lay in our power, but God gave the increase. Paul uses the word "God" with effective expressiveness. He lifts the discussion to its right level. The Corinthians were setting Paul against Apollos, reasoning against eloquence, eloquence against reasoning, rhetoric against logic, logic against rhetoric, and so were frittering away their time and their energy; the Apostle comes and says, you need both the logician and the rhetorician, but you must put them into their right places, they are servants, helpers, contributors; "but God gave the increase." If there is any light, any hope, any love, any joy, any truth, it is of God, and not of Paul or Apollos. "So then, neither is he that planteth anything"—anything to be spoken about or made much of—"neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." When did Paul so frequently use the word God? He repeats it, he returns to it, he seals every sentence with it. The Corinthians were debaters, not worshippers; partisans, not sons of the living God in the highest sense of the term.

"Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one;" Paul is as good as Apollos, and Apollos is as good as Paul, and neither of them is worthy of being mentioned, because they are only deacons, ministers, servants, errand-bearers, slaves of the Lord Jesus Christ; when you think of the Church and praise the Church, think of God, and let every doxology fly heavenward,

not a syllable lost upon the earth. To this sublimity of conception would Paul call us. "And every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour." Thus Paul recognises what he himself has done, and what Apollos has done, and each of them shall receive his own wages. Paul has been planting ten years or fifty, the Lord will not forget him; Apollos has been charming the Churches with that unrivalled eloquence, and with that unsurpassed knowledge of the Scriptures, in which he is so mighty; at eventide God will give him his crown. But there the matter will rest; Paul has no authority, Apollos has no authority. Paul never wants to have his name quoted; he would seem to cry in spiritual agony, "Brethren, let me alone! do not quote me, quote the Lord; I am an echo, not a voice; do not seal your letters with my authority, seal them with the superscription of Calvary."

"For we are labourers together with God." That is the highest tribute that can be paid to us. The whole administration is one, and if we are in that administration we are in it simply as helpers, called to co-operate with God; not that God needs co-operation, but that by co-operation he educates and strengthens the world. "Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." What other man dared have said so? No modern speaker dare have flashed out his words thus elliptically. "Ye are God's husbandry" is one figure, and with only a comma the Apostle continues, "Ye are God's building." We are afraid of mixed metaphors, because we are small thinkers and petty speakers, who have a reputation to take care of. Paul was a great, urgent thinker, a man who said, "The king's business requireth haste," and a man who left a good deal to be filled up. So he said, Ye are God's field, ye are God's building. We should be more expressive and instructive if less conscious of literary proprieties. "Ye are God's husbandry." Literally, ye are God's George, ye are God's field. This accounts for the popularity of the name of George in the early ages of the Church. The literal meaning is *field*—ye are God's George, ye are God's acre. Virgil wrote the Georgics, the field pieces, the field lays and criticisms and experiences. Brethren, your name is George; ye are a field under the Lord; you want tilling, ploughing, watering, planting,

all agricultural processes : but ye are God's field. Paul may have done a little ploughing, but he never made the field ; Apollos may have done a little watering, but he never made the field ; Paul and Apollos may have sowed a great deal of seed, but they never made the seed, they got that out of God's garner. It is God's seed, God's truth, God's wisdom, God's purpose—"Ye are God's husbandry." He will not let go of that word "God,"—he who was so free in the use of the term, "our Lord Jesus Christ," yet in all this introduction keeps up the word God as probably he never kept it up before, that he may make the least of the human, the mechanical, and the ecclesiastical, and lift it into its broader altitude and light and colour, the Divine conception and the Divine sovereignty of humanity. "Ye are God's building, God's house." He is speaking now, not of each individual, but of the Church. Of that Church he has said, "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ ; that in everything ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge . . . so that ye come behind in no gift."

Then dealing with individuals in that Church he says, ye are carnal ; ye are milk-drinkers, ye are milk-fed babes ; you could not eat strong meat if I gave it to you, it would be too much for your feeble digestion. Now, returning to the corporate idea of the Church, he says, ye are God's field, God's house. Who takes that view of the Church to-day ? Only one man here and there. Now, we have in the Church what is called discipline, so that little, mouldy, pharisaical respectabilities gather themselves together into what they call Church Meetings, and expel from their company anybody that has been doing what they call wrong. That was not Paul's idea of the Church. He would keep every man in the Church, and rebuke the defaulter night and day, but he would never let him go out if he could help it. Looking at the Church in its totality he said, "I thank my God always on your behalf" ; looking at the Church individually he says, "I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ" ; for ye are clamouring amongst one another in a spirit of debate as to whether Paul is greater than Apollos, or Apollos is greater than Paul ; I am ashamed of you ! Then

once more the great total idea glows like a discovered planet, and Paul says, Ye are God's field, and he wants every blade of grass; ye are God's house, a poor little hut indeed, but when he dwell in it his occupancy shall give it its only glory.

Thus we come upon great conceptions of the Church, and great conceptions of the nation. There are those who say that a nation is no better than the individuals composing it. That is fallacious; because, by the very association of individual with individual, each acquires something he could not otherwise possess. A nation is not a gathering of individuals who retain their individuality in some isolated and selfish sense; it is the friction of individuality, that clash and collision, out of which come light, motion, progress. There are those who say a church is only what its individuals are. That is wrong, or only in a very narrow sense can it be defended as right; because when the Church comes together we lose a great deal of individuality and we merge into one another; and herein is that saying true, "We are labourers together with God." The ministry is one, the Church is one; if you are rich, you hold your riches for the man who is poor; if you are gifted with wisdom, that wisdom is not to be spent on your own little fortune and destiny, it is to be shared by those on whom the spirit of genius has not alighted; and those who are most honoured and most exalted will feel an additional elevation, arising from the fact that they are the brothers of the humblest, and the trustees of him who has no helper. Ye are God's George, God's field; ye are God's house, God's building; and when God has once undertaken the ownership of the field he will see that the wheat is all garnered; when God has once owned the house he will watch every door and fill every window with noontide light. Ye are God's field; ye are God's building.

## PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY God, we would speak to thee as the healer of sorrow, the deliverer of bondsmen, the Saviour of souls. Thy Son lived for us, died for us, and for us rose again, and for us he intercedes ; we are Christ's, and Christ is God's. May we feel that we are involved in Christ, inwrought into his very thought and purpose and prayer ; therein may we find our steadfastness, the assurance of our heaven, and our immortality. Dry the tears no human hand can touch ; take hold of the hand of the blind, and lead them by a way they cannot see, but may their hearts glow with love as they think of the sacred end. Make the bed of the sick : watch by those who are suffering from solitariness : save the minds that tremble on the brink of madness : turn back the purposes of all wicked hearts : break the arm of tyranny, and humble in the dust the pride that is not founded upon righteousness : and thus bring us all, by a way short or long, difficult or easy, to the home, the resting-place, the sanctuary, of thy throne. Amen.

### 1 Corinthians iii. 10-23.

10. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

11. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

12. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble ;

13. Every man's work shall be made manifest : for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire : and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

14. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

15. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss : but he himself shall be saved ; yet so as by fire.

16. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you ?

17. If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy ; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

18. Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.

19. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.

20. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.

21. Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours;  
22. Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours;  
23. And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.

### THE FIERY TEST.

PAUL does not say that he was a wise master-builder, although at first reading of these words it would appear as if he made that representation of himself. Rather he says, My pattern was that of a man who builds wisely; I copied him, I followed his example, I saw how particular he was about the foundation: in that respect I thought his action worthy of repetition. "I had laid the foundation." Let there be no mistake about this statement: Paul did nothing of the kind, in the sense which obviously attaches to these words. He himself corrects that impression, for he says, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid." In the prophecies of Isaiah we had a distinct declaration on the part of God himself that he, not man, laid in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, elect, precious, a sure foundation. The foundation therefore is of God's laying, but there is a foundation upon a foundation in a sense that must be obvious to experienced men. There is the first line of doctrine, of holy teaching, of moral suggestion, and of heavenly expostulation and exhortation. Paul shows how to begin to build. Man has his foundation to lay upon the foundation that is already laid. If the human builder gets wrong in the first course which he lays, what will be the fate of the superstructure but hideousness, want of proper geometric form and relation, and ultimate down-throwing and destruction? Every man is to take heed how he builds upon the foundation. Although the foundation is of infinite importance it is not everything. The foundation is a word not complete in itself; it is a suggestive word, it has necessary consequents, and if those consequents be not followed out the foundation is misunderstood and dishonoured. If we have beginnings granted unto us the suggestion is that we must accept them as such and work upon them. When the Lord starts a man in life he gives him something to begin with, some talent, faculty, power—keen insight, imagination, strong understanding, wonderful power of endurance; he does not give all these probably to any one man, but one of these or more he



gives to every man to begin the world with. What is the meaning? That we are to go forth and develop what we start with. So when a foundation is supplied we are to build upon it.

We are to do more than build upon the foundation, we are to take heed how we build,—how, as to material; how, as to industry; how, as to the importance we attach to the structure. We are not to go through the building as hastily as we can and fly to ignoble rest; we are to live in our work, we are to be dominated by one grand and worthy idea, we are to be known as God's builders and God's building. Is the exhortation addressed to ministers? Some commentators think so; I cannot wholly follow their reasoning or accept their conclusions: but those who take that view represent the ministry as a building, an organisation; the foundation is laid, and pastors put upon the foundation such material as they can lay their hands upon,—gold, silver, precious stones; wood, hay, stubble; so that in some instances the Church looks noble, grand, wholly worthy within given limits of the Lord who is the foundation, the top-stone, and the pinnacle of the building. In some aspects the Church looks lovely. Men gaze upon the marvellous structure, beautiful as a dream, substantial as the stars, and they say, Gold, silver, precious stones: how beautiful, how delightful, how worthy of the purpose! Standing at another point of view, men say, How poor the Church is, a miserable hut, unworthy of our age,—wood, hay, stubble! Both the criticisms would be correct; neither perhaps would be complete without the other. Life itself is a mixture; every man is himself a contradiction: what wonder if the Church of God should present many and contrary aspects to anxious beholders? Why should not the exhortation apply rather to Christian men who are building themselves upon the foundation that is laid in Zion? Taking it in this way, what a practical doctrine Paul is preaching! He says, You have nothing to do with the foundation but to accept it; you must, however, begin the moment you touch the foundation to take heed how you build; it is not enough to get through your time, we are not working as hirelings, we should take some conscious pride in our work; everything we do should be the best we can do at that moment; not the best that is possible,

because sometimes possibility itself is overlaid with burdens, with solicitudes, with feebleness, so that the builder is himself discontented, and scornful with his own work: but he says in his heart, Blessed one, thou knowest I would do better to-day, but I cannot; my eyes cannot see very clearly, and as for my poor old hands they tremble a good deal; I do not seem to be able to get hold of the right kind of material at all: God, pity me; I do not want to spoil this life-temple thou hast appointed me to build, but thou wilt accept whatever I do, if at the moment of doing it it is the best that is possible to me. Then what wonder if God should turn water into wine, and dust into manhood, should turn some very humble materials into gold and silver and precious stones, so that we should wonder at the building, and none be more amazed than we at the result of our daily effort? How philosophical, to use no larger or more sacred term, is the Apostle's reasoning! He says the foundation is already laid. That is not dogmatic, in the sense of being papal, arbitrary, and overriding human choice and human judgment; it is the indication of a fact which coincides with all the other facts of life, which quadrates with the whole system of things, which is part of the complete totality of the Divine thought.

/ Thus in all life we find that we have nothing to do with beginnings; we start upon something that is already there. No man makes the earth which he tills; he is but a ploughman, he is not a creator; he can but tear the earth up, plough it, rip it, pierce it, open it, for the reception of seed; the earth itself is laid as a foundation by other hands. No man lights the sun; it is there already, man finds it there, leaves it there, uses it while he is here,—let every man take heed how he uses it. That same sun will light a murderer to his tragedy, or a saint to his altar. Let every man take heed how he uses the beginnings with which God has enriched life. No man lays the foundation of his own reason. He cannot tell whence he has his reason, yet he knows he has it; there are moments of religious and noble pride when he boasts himself a reasoner. Did you lay the foundation of your reason? No. Is it a gift which you bestowed upon yourself? No. Did you make it as a purchase in some of the bazaars of the world, east or west? No. It was God's gift:

let every man take heed how he builds thereupon. A man may reason himself down to hell ; he may turn his logic into a ladder to go down by. God meant reason to be a ladder of ascent. So then in all life we have Divine beginnings, a providence that is beforehand, an arrangement which we may accept or decline : but by the very fact of its being there it has an initial claim to our attention and consideration. Reflecting upon these things, how our function is limited and defined for us in a most wonderful way. We have to wait until we see what the child is ; we know it has some gift of God in it ; but we cannot begin until God begins and says to us by events and evolutions, This is the destiny of this particular child : train up the child in the way he should go, inclining a little to the east or to the west, to the north or to the south ; he is poetical, or prosaical ; he is mechanical, or commercial ; he is a stay-at-home who will dwell in tents, or the rover is in him, and the moment he sees a mountain he will paw for it as if he had rights up there, estates to claim. Train up a child in the way he should go : take heed how you build upon the foundation which God has laid in that brain, that heart, that will. So we are not such great creators after all. We do but shuffle the pieces, we are but clever rearrangers ; all the pieces are found for us, we add nothing to God's universe ; we elicit, evoke, we educate, lead out from germs into fruitions, but all the things were there without us. If any man think himself to be wise, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. Keep within your limits. All men are strong when they keep within arm's length ; the moment they try to reach one-eighth of an inch farther than they can, they are weak ; it is when the arm is well drawn in that it is strong, has the whole of its muscularity at its disposal. Keep therefore within your religious limits, your limits of reason, fact, event, and providence, and visible purpose in all things ; then should ye be strong men, whilst many may flutter who cannot fly ; they will be here and there and elsewhere, but they will build nothing.

How is it to be known what men are building either as pastors or as individual labourers ? " Every man's work shall be made manifest : for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed

by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." Oh, that fiery test! We could escape other criticism; but the criticism of fire, who can run away from with success? An awful moment is it when the fire leaps upon the work to try it. How we watch, how eager we are, with what strained eyes we notice the whole operation! See, the fire will not spare; it has a power of rising, and a power of turning round every angle: see how it penetrates, scorches, tests, lingers here as if it had found a secret, darts like a bloodhound that has caught the first scent of blood: see, it will try every man's work, of what sort it is. What miserable work some men do! How frivolous, how vain, how self-involved, how wholly foolish and despicable! A life of dreams, nightmares, speculations, that are insubstantial and wholly wanting in beneficence, either of purpose or of accomplishment. What wasted lives! How good they might have been! how helpful, how rich in sympathy, how generous in assistance of every kind! yet fools! What an impartial test this is! Fire is to try every man's work. Fire does not distinguish between one individuality and another; fire does not say, This was built by royal hands, and that was put up by plebeian fingers, therefore I must be gracious to the one, and severe to the other. Fire is no respecter of persons. But fire cannot burn gold. There is a quality that fire can only test, not destroy, and by its very testing make as it were more precious, that is to say, give further, completer trust in its quality and worth. No good workman has ever reason to fear fire. The boy who has scamped his lesson fears the master as he hears him approach, dreads the critic as he sees him adjusting the manuscript to his eyes; the boy knows that the first look will have in it the frown of condemnation: on the other hand, where the boy has worked well he welcomes the master, he says he knows the critic's face will be all smiles presently, because the work is honest, real, thorough, just as good work as a boy can do. We know what work we are conducting and completing in life; we need not wait for the day of fire. Some men could send themselves to their proper destiny instantaneously; they need not wrap themselves round in some garment of sleepiness or negligence, saying they will wait until the judge comes to tell them whether they are to go up or to go down; they know

that in heaven they would be far from home. Let there be no delusion about this matter of judgment. The fire will be an external critic, but the first fire should be an internal flame. Every man can try his own work by fire, or he can play the fool and palter with it, simply laying a finger upon it, nor ever trusting it lest it should come down upon him; then indeed is he victimising himself; he has the fire of judgment, conscience, experience within him: let the flames leap out upon the handiwork and try it of what sort it is.

There is a word of hope even in this penetrating judgment:—“If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” What chance have some people to build with anything but wood, hay, and stubble? They have hardly a foothold upon the earth; no face brightens when they draw near; their very approach is considered to be an appeal for alms or help or blessing of some kind: what if they are weary, heart-sick, heart-sore, and say they would gladly be spared the toil and fruitlessness of trying to build, when they have only wood, hay, and stubble at command? But let no heart be overborne: put up what materials you have, if they are the best you have; the fire will not spare them, but you yourself as the contributor of the best you have shall be saved. Then other men who might have done better may also be saved, but it shall be quite narrowly, simply saved, salvation *minus*, salvation that trembles on the brink of destruction; just saved, barely saved, hardly saved, nothing left of them but the merest line and shadow of personality. Are we to be content with this kind of salvation? If it be within our power to be saved wholly, triumphantly, gloriously, it will be wickedness on our part if we be content to be just barely saved. What shall be said of him who might have been in the very centre of heaven, and yet by his want of vigour, perseverance, self-control, watchfulness in prayer, is barely inside heaven’s door?

Now the Apostle resorts to the argument with which the chapter began; now he rebukes party spirit with the same lofty reasoning and with the same spiritual penetration. He says, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit



of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." Again he swings back to a tender, gentle, sympathetic spirit. We have watched all the fluctuations of his mind and heart, we have seen how he began by noble ascription of honour and credit to the Corinthian Church, then how he prostrated himself before the Church, as if by laying himself down in the dust he could acquire some power to judge and to condemn, and then how he stood up again, and delivered his message with a firm voice, and with an unwincing expression of countenance; and now he returns and comforts the Corinthian Church and says, Some of you are as bad as you can be, some of you are drunken, some of you are incestuous, some of you are almost beasts,—but ye are the temple of God. That is the mystery. It required a Paul to say so. We enhance our respectability by dwelling on the vices of others: Paul saw the ideal Church in the human actuality, and he said, Although these charges which are brought against you are solid and true, yet ye are the Temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you as in a chosen house. How full of rebuke, yet how full of encouragement! To every honest man the same message comes. Every soul is a contradiction within its own bounds. Sometimes the soul is almost in heaven; that same soul before the sun goes down shall have taken a path to hell. Which is the soul that Christ looks at? The upper one. When did Christ ever take a mean view of any man? When did not Christ see the very best aspect? When did he not amplify our little prayer, if it came from a broken heart, into a great petition and a prevalent intercession? Which of these two selves are we going to let triumph, the self that aspires, or the self that descends towards the earth; the self that is akin to angels, or the self that is overloaded and overborne with dust? Here comes in the action of will; here it is that men are tested. Given a man who in the very act of wrong does not want to do it, and that man will triumph at the last; given a man who is in Church and yet wants to be out of it, and the devil will manacle him and fetter him and cast him into outer darkness. God judges by motive, by spirit, by the uppermost desire; and, blessed be God, there are Peters who, all tears, all shame, can say, Lord, thou knowest all things—how I have



lied, how I have gone astray, how I have spoken the language of hell, how I have played the fool!—yet thou knowest that I love thee. That man is not far from the kingdom of God.

Then, finally, the Apostle tells them they need not quarrel about Paul and Apollos, about the planter and the waterer. "For," says he, "whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours." He could not have ended there; that would have been less than half a Gospel; it would have been in fact so wanting in Gospel as to have encouraged infidelity and all manner of unfaithfulness. So according to his custom, to the royalty of that mind which was more in heaven than on earth, he said, "all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." So the whole structure of the thought and the action is profoundly religious. Everything goes back to God. Read the genealogies in the New Testament: "Which was the son of——" and the strain rolls on, until it culminates in the declaration, "Which was the Son of God." The little flower belongs to the garden, the garden belongs to the earth, the earth is rooted in the sun, and the sun is rooted in God. All things ascend to the level whence they descended. This is the rhythm of the great movement. When the Mediator rises from his mediatorial seat he shall deliver up the kingdom to God and the Father, and God shall be all in all. What are we building? Every man is a builder. That cannot be avoided. What are we building? A house of God, a temple? or a house of darkness, a chamber of imagery, a pit in the earth? What are we building? A house that lifts itself towards the skies as if by right, a house conscious of its own glory and ultimate dignity, a house that already sees its own pinnacles flashing in the morning light? or a house that can only be entered at night by beasts of prey? Let every man take heed how he buildeth!

## PRAYER.

**ALMIGHTY** God, thou livest to give. Thou givest unto all men liberally, and upbraidest not. There is no man who has not more than enough, if he reckoned it aright. Thou art not the God of rebukes, but the God of benediction; thou dost not live in judgment, but in mercy, in healing, in pity; thou dost redeem the world by the Cross of thy Son, We bless thee that Christ is the Amen of God; we rejoice in his Verily, verily. Through that roof no rain can come; into that sanctuary no ravenous beast can enter. We stand in the Yea of God. We rejoice in thy promises, which are exceeding great and precious, yet not too great to be redeemed, though too precious to be lost in any syllable. We have not, because we ask not. We might live in the rocks of heaven, we might make the whole week one calm Sabbath, and never lay down the trumpet from our lips. We bless thee, if in any degree we enjoy the sunshine of thy love: but whatever thou dost give is but an earnest; we cannot ever have more than the firstfruits: who can reap the fields of infinity? who can overtake the bounty of God? Now that we have begun to taste the sweets and hear the music of life, how wondrous it is! This is the dawn of immortality. In life is liberty, joy, music. If our life be hidden with Christ in God we cannot die, death is dead. Help us to enter into thy promises, to abide in the sanctuary of the Almighty, and to hide ourselves in the pavilion of God. Thou hast roofed in thy sanctuary that we might find in it lodgment and rest and hospitality. Deliver us from the spirit of wandering, lest we roam away and fail to find our way back again; may we follow the footprints of the shepherds, may we pitch our tents where they pitched theirs: may our adventure never become our lunacy, may we inquire for the old way, and lovingly haunt the old paths, the thoroughfares of heaven. Deliver us from instability of heart, from being here and there, from attempting to go in opposite directions at the same time; save us from the folly of speculation, whilst always keeping an open mind towards the windows of heaven. The Lord lift us up above ourselves: we are the creatures of time and space, and we are soon overborne: give us one touch of the spirit of immortality, and we shall hold earth and time and space in contempt; our light affliction will be but for a moment, if we look at the things which are not seen, the eternal things, the everlasting Yes. Amen.

### 1 Corinthians iv.

#### PAUL'S CONCEPTION OF THE MINISTRY.

**T**HE Apostle is not referring to some particular man when he uses the apparently specific term "a man"; he means, let every one, any one, all persons, take this view of the Christian

ministry. It is not a view to be taken by one or two, or a specific few; it is the view that is complete and final: nothing can be added to it, no modification of it can lawfully take place. The ministry of Christ is a stewardship,—“as of the ministers of Christ”; not preachers only, or pastors, but servants, slaves. The word “minister” has a deeper meaning in the word which Paul used than is usually attached to it in its English form. A minister, as Paul used that term, was not a dainty person appointed to do dainty work at certain specific times; he was the daily slave, the continual and long attendant of Jesus Christ, watching him with eager expectation, receiving his message from his Master’s lips alone, and never trifling with a single word which his Master spoke. “And steward.” In a Greek household the steward was generally a slave, yet he was trusted; by his very servitude he was supposed to be doubly bound to his master. He was not only treasurer or secretary, or person entrusted with some specific responsibility; all that kind of service might, to a certain degree, be hired or bought: but the man himself belonged to the household, was part and parcel of the very estate and inheritance; he was not a hireling introduced into the house, he was one born within its limits or incorporated within its whole representation of unity and utility. “The mysteries of God:” not the trifles of God, not the little transient, frivolous incidents or accidents of human history, but a treasurer or student of things mysterious, secret, hidden, wonderful; mysteries rooted in eternity, secret things springing from the very core of God himself; therefore not to be explained, but to be set forth, proclaimed, now uttered strongly, and now tenderly; now with an instrument of thunder, and now with the voice of whispering and tears. But the mysteries were God’s, not man’s. Man has his little mysteries; man is an inventive creature. We are not called upon as ministers to add to the mysteries of God; they are sufficient in themselves, in number, in quality, in majesty: it behoves us rather to speak of them reverently, and never to speak our own words in relating the mysteries of God. Blessed is that minister, preacher, teacher, who can be content with Bible words when he comes into the deep things of God. No words of ours can so touch the glory of Divine mysteries as they are touched by Biblical treatment. That is one of the proofs of the inspiration

of the Bible. Try to alter the language; set yourselves to the emendation of the Lord's Prayer; turn into modern eloquence the twenty-third psalm: every touch would be defilement. So when we come to deal with the Cross of Christ let us have no theorising and invention and philosophising and controversial display, but let us quote the Saviour himself, and quote the chiefest of his Apostles; yea, let us hold our tongues as a religious duty until we can charge and inflame our lips with the sacred eloquence of the Bible itself. The flower was not made to be plucked; to pluck a flower, as we have often reminded ourselves, is to kill it: to paraphrase the Bible is to pluck its flowers. Let the words of the Bible stand in their integrity and simplicity, and when they blind us with their glory, or appal us with a weird ghostly dignity, our business must be to close our eyes, and to fall down in an attitude of adoration, and say, God is in this place, and we knew it not. Thus the Apostle occupies a position of great dignity. There was nothing officially dainty about his voice or position or function: but the ministry itself is an ineffable dignity; to be the slave of Christ is to occupy a higher status than to be enthroned with Cæsar.

"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." The word "found" is peculiar. A steward is not simply to be faithful, but he is, according to the term which Paul used, to be discovered to be faithful. A man's faithfulness is to be the result of a discovery on the part of the searcher, the judge, or the critic. The master watches the steward, hardly knowing perhaps what his peculiar temperament or constitution may be; but the master keeps close watch, his scrutiny is unremitting, point is related to point, and one day's work is compared with another, and the whole diary of the man's action is regarded in its unity; and the result is that the man has been discovered to be faithful, found to be faithful, as the result of a prolonged, critical, unsparing scrutiny: then the printed testimonial may be burned, the testimony of friends is no longer required; the man has proved himself to be faithful. In order to such proof there must be time. Men are faithful now in points; some persons are really pious in certain aspects and on certain days. But aspects are not, persons; mere points are not the character of a man. The servant,

steward, slave, must be tested, year in and year out, and he must be discovered to be faithful; and the man who holds the balance must say to the approved steward, thou art weighed, and thou art found faithful. We do not know who is faithful until certain trials have taken place; we do not know who is good until the persons examined have been vexed, threatened, deprived of dignity, until they have been affronted, insulted, dishonoured; then we shall know their quality. You do not know people when you are allowing them to have all their own way; then you think them sunny, genial, fraternal, good-natured, wonderfully well-conditioned: that is not judgment. You cannot tell what a man is until you have asked him for something, thwarted him in something, opposed him, come into mortal conflict with him; then you will know whether he is the soft, amiable, genial creature that you supposed him to be. The Apostle stood this test. He was despised, the coat was torn from his shoulders, he had no certain dwelling-place, he was subjected to every indignity; yet he was discovered to be faithful,—his ministry being founded upon character, not upon gift or genius.

Now Paul proceeds to lay down a doctrine which saved him a world of trouble:—

“But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.”

That is the sanctuary in which the Apostle rested. What does human judgment amount to? It is often a mere prejudice, or it simply registers a passing emotion; there is really no substance in it, no abiding value or quality; the man who is judging may die before he has pronounced his judgment; the man who is criticising may be discovered in the very midst of his most elaborate criticism to be a felon. What does human judgment amount to? It will be all forgotten to-morrow, and the judges will be dead, and their judgment passed into oblivion.

“Yea,” Paul continues, “I judge not mine own self.” A man cannot really penetrate into his own inmost quality. “For I know nothing by myself:” not exactly against myself; the literal meaning rather is, for I know nothing concerning myself;



I cannot see myself through and through ; I am such a mixture of motive, I am so self-conflicting, I am a thousand men : so I will not judge myself. "Yet am I not hereby justified:" because I do not judge, therefore I must not be considered to be above judgment ; I simply mean that he that judgeth me and every other man is the Lord. There is one tribunal, one day of judgment, one arbitrament, and by that all must stand for ever. Then, when the Divine judgment takes place, men will be seen as they are.

"Therefore judge nothing before the time:" especially judge nothing unkindly : there may be an explanation not yet revealed ; the Lord may come and put all things that have occurred in life into a totally different light : in our judgment we are short of insight, of mental range and capacity ; we are short also of information of the truest and deepest kind ; we only know accidents, incidents, things that externally happen ; motive, spring, impulse, we cannot understand : judge not, that ye be not judged : remit all difficulties in life to the Divine judgment ; then it may be found that all things had been seen upside down ; we may discover that all our judgments are simply so many calculated and dignified mistakes. Blessed be God for the judgment Divine it is complete, impartial, unalterable. In the light of that judgment many a man whom we have thought to be difficult, impracticable, unmanageable, may be shown to have really been the victim or slave of some constitutional peculiarity which we could not understand ; men who have been regarded as selfish, illiberal, wanting in magnanimity, may be discovered to have been operating from a motive that lay beyond our judicial knowledge : on the other hand, many a man may be found to have been only eloquent in the tongue, while his heart was dumb ; many a man may be found to have given with the hand only, whilst his heart was a wrinkled, grudging miser. "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts." It is clear to me, though many do not join in this judgment of the word, and many learned and most able men wholly differ from it, that Paul and the other Apostles expected that the Lord might come back again at any moment. There are various ways of reading the apostolic



exclamation regarding the second coming, the Lord's advent, but not one of them seems to me so straight, simple, and complete in its proof, as the reading that implies that the Apostle Paul expected the Lord Jesus Christ back again upon the earth any day, any night, any hour.\* This would seem to account for his urgency in many instances; he would seem to say, Brethren, there is no time for this: the Lord is coming; I hear him; he may be here at the crowing of the cock, at the dawn, in early morning, by midday; he may choose the time of the shining of the evening star: there is no time for controversy, eating and drinking, debating, clamour, strife,—only time for prayer, and song, and exultant expectation. There is no reason why this should not be the law of the Church now. Nothing would require to be altered that is vital; the only change that would take place would be purely local, personal, visual. As a matter of fact, the Lord is coming every moment: the Judge is at the door. We may have been mistaken in our literal interpretations, but the sublime, all-vitalising fact is there; that life is a continual revelation of the Lord, and that man is nearer eternity than he is near time. Eternity is nearer than to-morrow. We do not realise this; we are the victims of the letter; we imprison ourselves within what we call facts,—as if there could be any fact in more than a symbolical sense or a transient aspect: every fact being an index-finger pointing to the truth, which is always arguer than fact. Fact has no atmosphere, no perspective, and until it is atmospherised and set in perspective it cannot play its right part as one of the monitors of human life. Set it down then as a fact that the Lord is coming, coming to-day, always coming. He comes where he is expected; he never disappoints the expectation of the heart. If we want to see the Lord we may see him; he answers not our speculation but our prayer. "Then shall every man have praise of God," as he deserves it; the great man shall be great, and the little man shall be little, and every man shall have his due reward. That will be sufficient. Every man will acknowledge the justice of the award; there will be, as there can be, no appeal. There is a voice within which attests the decrees of justice. It may suit a man for temporary

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\* See also, on this subject, *post*, p. 249.

purposes to deny, or complain, or repudiate certain awards and decrees, but within his living soul he knows what is just,—unless indeed he has grieved the Spirit, or quenched the Spirit, or in some way committed suicide, slaughtering his very soul, and being nothing more than a dead man in God's account. There will be many differences in the final allotment: blessed be God for that glorious fact. We shall not all be in one place even in heaven. It would be no heaven to some of us if we were within a thousand miles of certain other people, whom we could name, unless a great change takes place in us or in them. "In my Father's house are many mansions:" some will be very high up, and others will be very low down; yet they may all be in God's ample heaven. When George Whitfield was asked, "Do you expect to see John Wesley in heaven?" He answered, "No, I do not expect to see him there." "Why not?" "Because John Wesley will be so near the throne, and I shall be so far from it, that I can have no hope of seeing John Wesley in heaven." A noble charity; a noble wisdom. We do not take that view of these illustrious men, but that one of them should have taken it of himself shows a conception of possibility, that indicates a large love and a truly modest self-estimate. It is curious that the Apostle Paul was urging the Corinthians not to think too highly of the ministers. If he had been living now, he need not have written that part of the letter. The Apostle was most anxious that he and Apollos should not be thought too highly of: what a marvellous condition of society! what an impossibility! There is not a man living now who does not feel the temptation occasionally, though he may not yield to it, to think that every minister is only part of a man. That, however, is not true. There are some ministers who, if they had been sent to school soon enough, and taught to read and write and do the first four rules of arithmetic, might by some certain business faculty have been living in a villa!

The Apostle becomes himself again in the laying down of great broad laws and considerations:—

"For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (ver. 7).

Is Apollos an eloquent man? his eloquence is mine. Can I excel Apollos in reasoning? my logical faculty belongs to Apollos. The two ministers are parts of one ministry; so whether it be Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or John, whoever it may be, they should all be taken together. The ministry must be looked at in its unity, not in its little personalities. One minister can do what another cannot do; the other can do what he is unable to accomplish, and they both know it, and each glories in the other's excellence.

The Apostle can be satirical, ironical, as in the eighth verse,—“Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us,”—you have been living a dramatic life; you have built your canvas theatre, and played your little tricks before high heaven. Then—for how long could Paul be angry or even satirical?—he falls out of his piercing sarcasm into his melting, pleading pathos: “and I would to God ye did reign”—in reality as you have been reigning seemingly—“that we also might reign with you.” How rapidly this man's tone changes! Now he is in full banter, now his lips are wreathed with scorn, and his voice is a tempest of indignation; and in a moment, as if self-smitten, he falls down, cries, almost begs pardon, and says to the people whom he has wounded with his tremendous sword—I would to God ye were in reality what you are in seeming: I would to God that we were all kings together: brethren, think on these things.

Then he sets forth the aspect in which apostolic life appeared to him:—

“For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men” (ver. 9).

The figure is that of the arena: all the people are assembled within the vast amphitheatre; there are the human victims; presently there will spring out upon them lion, or tiger, or beast of prey; and the Apostles are there, feeble, shattered, worn out, unable to cope with a child, much less with a wild beast out of the forest. It seems, saith Paul, as if God has made a spectacle of us to the world, and to angels, and to men: we seem to be so

unequal to the occasion ; the instrument is so little adapted to the battle ; the men we have at our disposal are so few, so utterly insufficient, that it seems as if God were laughing at the Apostles whom his Son ordained. Thus the Apostle Paul had his moments of depression. To us the Apostle, looking at things from an external standpoint, found himself in great weakness and in pitiable fear. Yet he never abandoned the work ; he pursued it, died in it as a hero dies. He was most heroic when he was most patient. It is easy to be courageous in the intoxication of excitement : to be courageous when there is no such excitement is the true test of our quality. It is recorded by the historian, in connection with the great American civil war, that he himself was passing by certain soldiers, who were all seated on the ground, and apparently repairing rents in the backs of their coats ; he wondered what they could be doing ; he inquired ; he found that a tremendous attack was to be made by daylight next morning, though day by day an assault had been made on the same place with terrific force ; but a last stroke was to be delivered. What were these men doing ? Quietly writing their names and their home addresses, and stitching them into their coats, that to-morrow, when they possibly lay dead on the battlefield, their friends might be directly communicated with, and the solemn and tragical information conveyed. That is courage. Not in the midst of the battle, but calmly, quietly, looking forward to the fight, and calculating possible defeat ; not running away, but thinking of friends, and home, and death, with a soldier's nerve, with a hero's equanimity. Let Christians take an example from that. The times call us to great stress, to great activity, and to great suffering. The soldiers did it for their country ; blessed be God for their patriotism : we are called upon to do it for the Cross, and for eternity.

## 1 Corinthians vii.-ix.

### PECULIAR QUESTIONS.

**I** SPEAK this by permission, and not of commandment.” “I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.” “I think also that I have the Spirit of God.” Let us see what kind of quality we have to deal with, apart altogether from the mystery of inspiration, when we are dealing with such a man as the Apostle Paul. What was he out of the chair? Of what quality are God’s princes? Unrobed and unmitred and unchaired, how does this man walk abroad? Will he be weak as other men? Will his want of mental capacity be painfully obvious? Or is he a great instrument, a man of immense and dominating faculty, even when left to his own judgment, and the movement of his own mind? The answers will be found in these chapters. The Church at Corinth had been turned into a debating club. Questions of more or less interest had arisen as between the members of that community. They referred the matter to the Apostle Paul, and in these chapters he addresses himself to “the things whereof ye wrote unto me.”

The first question was one of marriage. The Apostle is not speaking about the general question of marriage, otherwise he would be contradicting in this portion of his epistolary theology what he so distinctly affirms in other portions. The questions are peculiar as to themselves, and specially peculiar as to the season at which they were discussed. The Apostle is not talking about a Christian man marrying a non-Christian woman, or a Christian woman marrying a non-professor of Christianity, although these verses are often quoted in that sense and with that limitation. Such quotation is a positive perversion of the apostolic meaning. The case is this:—Here are two people,

husband and wife ; one of them has been converted to Christ, what is to be done ? Can they live together ? Must they separate ? The Apostle will not allow for a moment that the Christian has any difficulty about this. He looks upon a Christian as an ever-enlarging soul, taking in more and more points of life, and acquiring more and more intellectual and spiritual territory, and holding it in the name of his Lord. He does not therefore imagine a little pedantic Christian saying, Now that I have become a Christian, what am I to do with this heathen woman ? Blessed be God, the Apostle never thought of asking any such question. Christians must not be pedants. The moment a Christian sets up his little morality and says, But what must *I* do ? he has lost Christ. But the Apostle clearly saw that the heathen woman might object ; she might say, My husband is no longer the same to me he used to be, he is a fanatic, he is a fool, he has given himself up to a superstition, he has gone away with people who are evidently mad : I cannot tolerate such a life as this, therefore I must leave him. Paul says that question may very naturally come up : now what is to be done with it ? It arose at home, and it must be settled at home. With wondrous fatherly insight he says, Now first of all, before you put one another away, think of the children. Then the heathen woman says, Certainly, that is a point that ought to be considered : the heathen man says, Yes, we cannot afford to treat that question lightly. Why, says Paul, do not forget this, that if one of you is a Christian, the children are sanctified by that very fact ; they are no longer common children, they come into rights and relations and prospects which are peculiar and incommunicable : the children do not suffer for the heathenism, but they profit by the Christianity. What does the Apostle mean by being "sanctified" ? He does not mean being made "holy," but he means marked, specialised, separated : consider, therefore, the children before you pedantically or superstitiously give up one another. But if the unbelieving husband will depart from the believing wife, let him go ; God hath called us to peace, but if the pagan will make off with himself, we cannot retain him. On the other hand, "What knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband ? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife ?" Thy pagan partner is a home mission field : here is



a set of circumstances that may be handled profitably for Christ and for yourselves. Let us therefore have no pedantry in the Church; small, moral little Christians, leaving their wives and families because they are too good to live with them. Paul said, Out upon such hypocrisy and cant! Even the veriest bed of corruption cannot taint the sun. The Christian can afford to live under circumstances which are of a discouraging and, in some instances, of a humiliating nature. The Apostle Paul therefore says, Christian husband, stand to your guns; Christian wife, keep at home: if the pagan woman wants to leave, of course she must leave; if the pagan husband wants to go, of course he must go. That Roman law was not so stern as some other law. The Roman law gave rights—hear it, O heavens, and be astonished, O society!—to the wife. When the Apostle says that he was speaking on this subject by “permission,” and not by “commandment,” he meant, I speak permissively, not commandingly; I accord liberty, I do not define right. That is the meaning of the Apostle’s words—words which have been very often perverted and misunderstood.

Now he turns and generalises the whole situation. His principle is thus laid down (vii. 20):—“Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.” How often are these words perverted! The word “calling” is made to signify profession, situation, condition in life; and the Apostle is quoted as saying to all men, how poor and miserable soever, Men, be quiet; be content with that station in life in which it hath pleased God to place you. Nothing of the kind. I say to every man, Be as discontent as you can with your present attainments, whatever they are, if in advancing farther you can carry up a broader, nobler, more generous, and more beneficent manhood. The word calling in this verse and throughout the context has a Divine relation and not a human limitation. Thus:—God calls men, and in obeying the Divine call we are to pay no attention to our circumstances; it is the call we obey, it is not the social situation which we feel, either as a burden or a crown. The social situation has nothing to do with it; there is a great call of love resounding through the ages, saying, Return, O wanderer, to thy home! The rich man says, I will go: the slave says, I

will go : the uncircumcised says, I will go : the circumcised says, I will go : and the Apostle says, "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called," and not make any difficulty about his situation or his circumstances. Thus :—I was uncircumcised, what must I do ? Come ! But must I not first remove the stigma, the brand, or the sign of my circumcision ? No. Another man says, I am only a slave, I have on the manacles and the fetters ; what am I to do ? Put off all these old clothes, and come in the splendid attire of a meek and a quiet spirit. Is the Apostle upholding slavery ? On the contrary, he is destroying it. The Apostle was too great a man to fight any question in mere detail. He said to the slave, You lead such a life as will make slavery impossible ; be so noble, so grand, so majestic, that you will make it felt that you are not a slave in reality, whatever you may be in name. This is the subtle spirit, this is the fundamental action of Christianity, that it does not vex itself with merely passing details, but lays down sovereign principles, which, being carried out, end in liberty, growth, progress.

But the argument of the Apostle related not only to the peculiarity of the case but to the seasons which he distinguishes by the words "the present distress." The Apostle was evidently looking forward to the close of the dispensation. Many critics try to show us that the Apostle was really not looking forward to the immediate closing of the dispensation, but in my judgment they fail. I have studied their arguments, and balanced all their reasonings, and I have said, All this amounts to a theological *post hoc* ; these people want to prove something which they have assumed, and they want to make certain words fit in with certain foregone conclusions, and it will not do. I cannot read the Pauline epistles or other epistles without feeling that the Apostles were looking forward to the almost immediate coming of their Lord : whether that event took place in the destruction of Jerusalem, is a question which theologians may argue, more or less profitably ; but it is impossible from my point of view to avoid the conclusion that these men always wrote in haste, as if they were not sure they would be able to sign their own letter before the heavens rent, and the Son of Man returned to the

vision and the touch of the world. This being so, the letter is explained. The Apostle would seem to say, Brethren, you are talking about marrying, and giving one another in marriage, and what is to be done in the household under such-and-such circumstances,—why, all these things are hardly worth arguing at all, already the axe is laid unto the root of the tree, already I hear a sound as of advancing footsteps, and whilst we are arguing these little local domestic matters we may be summoned to the consummation of things. Thus:—This house has but one year to run in its lease: is it worth our while spending a thousand pounds in connection with it? The voice of prudence says, Certainly not; you have but a year to remain, why then should you go to this expenditure? We have but a certain time to remain in the country, shall we adjust certain questions that are now exciting the anger or the prejudice of the multitude? No, it is not worth while.

Thus we are always reasoning outside theological lines, and the Apostle says upon all these questions about eating and drinking, and marrying and giving in marriage, and all these questions about circumcision, and slavery, and male and female, Why, the whole controversy will be settled presently; there will be one gleam of light through the air, and in the twinkling of an eye the whole firmament will be filled with midday, and the Lord will come, the new relationship will be established, the new sovereignty will advene, and then where will be our little questions about marrying and giving in marriage? “Brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.” A singular word is this, “abusing,” in verse 31 (ch. vii.). What should we say to be the meaning of the word “abusing”? Probably we should say he abuses the world who misuses it. That is not the Apostle's meaning. The Apostle's meaning would be better expressed thus:—“And they that use this world, as not over-using it,”—not being too fussy, and making too much of nothing; playing

with clay, trying to find eternity in time. Men over-use the world and get their hands too deeply into it ; they play the fool with it.

The next point that is touched upon in the inquiry made by the Corinthians was about meat offered to idols, and about eating that meat. The question is a very simple one. The heathen priests took meat into the temples, and offered it to the idols, and having done this they went and sold it to the dealers who offered it in the shambles ; and there was a conscience that said, Now about this meat : it has been handled by pagan priests, it has been offered on pagan altars, and it has been bought out of the heathen temples, and is now in the general shambles offered for sale : what is to be done with this meat ? Some say, We cannot touch it, because it has been offered to idols. Others said, An idol ! why, an idol is nothing at all ; the meat is not tinged or tainted by its having been offered to nothing at all ; the meat is as good as any other meat : produce it, enjoy it. The Corinthian casuist said to the Apostle under these circumstances, What shall we do ? And the Apostle delivers the judgment which is recorded in the eighth chapter : and having given his own judgment upon the subject he says, After all, we must consider the weak conscience. Weakness governs the world ; it is always the minority that rules, although if you were to say so in a public meeting you would be hooted from the platform. But it is always the minority that rules. It is weakness that stops the house, it is the baby that keeps the family at home ; it is the lame limb that detains all the sound faculties and says, Stop ! What ! am I to stop because I have one lame limb ? I am sound in all my other limbs, and sound in all my mental faculties, and am I to be humbled in this way ? Yes, you are, and you cannot get out of it. So the Apostle says, Here is a lame man in the Church, and the Church must wait for him ; and the Church says, This is the singular pass we have come to, all waiting for one lame man. The Apostle says, That is the very idea of the Church. The whole universe may be waiting for one little lame world called the earth : nobody can tell how fast the universe might get on but for this cripple called the earth. Nobody knows how great the family might have been and how

wonderful in fame and influence but for the sick-chamber. The Apostle says, Here is one poor man; call him weak, do not let him be under the impression that he is strong; let him know exactly what he is, and tell him that it is to his weakness we make this obeisance. What is the use of your standing over a little baby, and pouring upon its unconscious head a whole Niagara of rhetorical expostulation? The thing is impossible. So the Apostle said, We must wait for this man: he is a man, he is not much of a man, he is about as little of a man as it is possible to be and yet be a man; but Christ died for him, therefore we must wait. Now, says the Apostle, I will tell you what I will do; I dare not say anything to anybody else, but this is my position. I can eat this meat; it is nothing to me that the meat has been offered by some heathen priest to a heathen idol; I do not care for that for one moment: but there is a man just there, who says he would be hurt in his soul if I took it. I say, Very well, I will not take it. That is the ground on which all total abstainers from innocent things must rest, if the action is to be widely influential. Many a man says, I could take this wine, I should know exactly when to give over, it would do me no harm, I could take it with a good conscience; but if I did take it, there is a poor soul that could not even inhale the odour of the wine, without the appetite fired as from hell. I say, Very well, I throw it on the ground, I will not touch it, for your sake. That argument can never be overturned; and if there be a man who never does anything for any other man's sake, let him not name the name of Christ.

## 1 Corinthians ix. 15.

"It were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void."

### APOSTOLIC RIGHTS.

WE should have thought there was nothing worse than death. The Apostle Paul says in effect, It is not in the slightest degree necessary that any man should live, but it is infinitely needful that every man should be good, honest, upright, useful. How foolishly, then, we have reasoned upon this matter ! We have gone so far sometimes as to say, My daily bread depends upon it ! The Apostle Paul says, What do you want with daily bread ? that is of no consequence ; it is not at all necessary that you should live, in the body, live upon daily bread : it were better for you to die ; better far, than that you should make a fool of yourself in the sight of God ; than that you should kill your soul ; than that you should be an empty heart, without moral riches, without spiritual confidence, without beneficent nobleness. This is quite a Christian tone ; no one else ever used that argument with the same measure, direction, and purpose of force. Others have had their attention called to thoughts that lay in that direction, but it required a Christian, who had been a long time with Christ on the Cross, to say, that it is not at all necessary that any man, how great soever, should merely live, breathe, eat daily bread. The necessity is that a man's soul should live ; his honour should be immortal ; his beneficence as enduring as the love of God.

The Corinthians never used the Apostle Paul well. There was always a minority against him. That minority was obstinate, selfish, Judaic in thought and in inclination, and altogether wanting in that noble overwhelming enthusiasm which belongs to Christian faith and loyalty. There were men in Corinth who questioned whether Paul was an apostle at all,



They were literalists, men who set up certain inch-high standards by which to measure apostleship. They were mere arithmeticians, with a semi-moral cast, somewhat inclined to be pious when piety required no sacrifice at their hands. They would set up their test, especially the test of having seen Christ in the flesh, and companied with him visibly, tangibly, and audibly for many days. The Apostle handled that objection with his usual masterliness. He was calm in all such argument; he had lived too long to permit himself to get into any tumult of debate with ignorant and retrogressive minds. He therefore said, "Am I not an apostle?" Instead of laying the emphasis upon the word "Apostle," and speaking the inquiry upon the rising inflection, put the emphasis upon the word "not," and let the inquiry rather go downward than upward. Thus: Am I *not* an apostle? are you quite sure about it? what are your signs of apostleship? If you make the visible manifestation of Christ an indispensable sign of apostleship, even to that I can submit as to a test: "Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?"—not perhaps in the same way other men saw him. There is a larger sight; Paul was always moving in the direction of larger spaces, larger interpretations, and larger uses of things. If it comes to seeing, said he, what do you mean by seeing? Do men only see with the eyes of the body? Do they only see the physical Christ? Is there not a larger seeing, a seeing of the very soul, and a seeing into the very soul of Christ himself? Then he turns upon a favourite method of his own—the *argumentum ad hominem*; he turns right round upon these Corinthian sceptics as to his apostleship, and says, "Are not ye my work in the Lord?"—when you run down my apostleship you run down your own Christian standing: you never would have been so far on as you are but for me:—"If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord"; it is not the very brightest seal an apostle might have, it is not a proof to be very proud of, you are not the richest and noblest specimens of Christian manhood that the Christian imagination could dream; but such as you are, poor enough in quality, stunted enough in growth, perverse, crooked, in mind, and altogether selfish in many of your thoughts, yet even yourselves would not have been so far on as you are but for me; and yet

you turn round upon your very master and teacher and say, Thou art not an apostle. Paul did not give up his ministry on that account. It does not take a great mind to resign a ministry. Many men have thought they were acting quite a majestic part in human history when they resigned their work. It seemed to satisfy their vanity, to please their little fevered pride, to say that they had "resigned." The Apostle Paul did not resign, he still continued his ministry, his persuasion, and his prayer; he said, The Apostle must not give up, the Christian must not lose heart; these scholars are very wayward and obstinate, and their ignorance is almost invincible, I can hardly get another idea introduced into their brain; yet I must be the more patient in proportion to their obstinacy. When a man talks thus there is no need to question his Apostleship. He may not have a written paper to the effect that on a given day in a given year he was appointed an Apostle, but he turns round and says, Behold! let the work be the witness.

The Apostle would not take any money from the Corinthians because they did not know how to give it. They begrudged everything. Many men do give money—with an explanation. There are persons who have a genius for giving subscriptions, with a footnote. They do part with the money, but they would rather have kept it. The Apostle says to the Corinthians, Keep it, every whit; I will not touch it: I have a right to it; I have the right of reason; I have the right of the ancient law; I have the right of common habit; I have the right of the Lord's own appointment in this matter. Jesus Christ himself entitled me to receive carnal things in exchange for spiritual; but when I have reference to your temper and disposition, your money is even worse than you are yourselves; I would not touch it; I will work an hour later every day, I will make an extra tent every week; I will have nothing to do with such a begrudging and reluctant remuneration. In this chapter the Apostle argues out the case well. He shows that as an Apostle he has certain rights and claims, that, like the other apostles, he could take with him a sister or a wife upon his missionary tours, and have a right to be maintained by the churches that he visited. He adopted this right on many occasions, he availed himself of the liberality of the

people ; but to these turbid spirits at Corinth he says, I will not touch anything that belongs to you. He could be very proud. It was not necessary for him to live, therefore his pride was not an ebullition of vanity but the assertion of a great sovereign ruling principle in life :—" It were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void " in this respect ; death is preferable to the humiliation to which you in Corinth invite me. If this were a mere tiff between the Apostle and some of the libidinous and dissolute Corinthian souls, it would not be worth while to revive it, but it is in connection with such matters as these that the apostolic character is most graphically and vividly developed and brought before us.

Now the Apostle resorts, as he always does, to great principles. He is not acting passionately, petulantly ; he is not doing something to-day which he will regret to-morrow, coming back and begging the Corinthians' pardon for having acted so impetuously and vehemently. He says, My principles are such that I can live upon them. These principles he indicates with startling distinctness :—" but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the Gospel of Christ." That is apostleship ; the man who says this must have seen the Lord sometime, somewhere ; he may not have seen him as other men have seen him, but he never could have said these words if he had not seen the Lord's heart and held long converse with the Man of the Cross, and the Man on the Cross. It would have been an easy thing for the Apostle to grind his Corinthian opponents to powder and scatter them upon the sea ; but, said he, I am not sent to destroy men's lives but to save them, because I am sent in the Spirit and power of Christ ; therefore, if I did certain things, the very course which I took would be misunderstood ; it might be a right course, it might be a useful course, but because it would hinder the Gospel of Christ I will not take it ; by-and-by my position will be made clear, in the meantime I will hold my tongue where I might righteously speak, I will make no claim where I might urge a reasonable demand ; I will make the Gospel of Christ first, foremost, supremest ; that that may proceed and conquer shall be my living and unchanging aim : and therefore I can suffer all things, and exceedingly rejoice in my gathering tribulations. You

cannot get hold of a man of that soul, so as to punish him very much, by simply withholding your patronage from him. He feeds upon his hunger, his deprivation is one of his luxuries; he says, This, O Christ, is for thy sake, and therefore it is nothing; do not set it down in thy book as any virtue on my part; I feel now as if I want to do it; thou dost feed my soul so bountifully with the bread of heaven that I do not want any other bread, and even in this miserable Corinth I feel as if I had acre upon acre of fruitful garden and orchard: Lord, reckon it not as for me in the book of thine account. Why did he not leave the ministry altogether, and go forward with his tent-making? He gives the reason—"For though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of"—it is no sacrifice on my part—"for necessity is laid upon me; yea"—not only is necessity laid upon me, but—"woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel,"—to be dumb would be to be punished; to hold my tongue would be to reverse the decree of heaven, and set my puny self against the predestination of God. A man like that does not wait until the church is built, he preaches at the street-corner; when he is tied by chains to some custodian, he preaches the Gospel to the one hearer, and thus sets a seed of truth even in Rome itself. "Necessity is laid upon me,"—I must preach, I feel I can do nothing else; whatever else I do, even tent-making, is a struggle, and is an indication that my work is larger, and when I am preaching there is no time, no space, no pain; I feel then as if I were under solar action, revolving with quick velocity and flaming glory around my central sun. When men have to lash themselves up to their work, they can never do it, whatever the work be. A man who has to scourge himself to poetry will never write poetry. The man who has to prick and puncture himself, in order that he may begin to paint something, will never paint anything the world will care to see. When Victor Hugo was asked whether making epic poetry was not very difficult, he said, "No: easy, or impossible." So it is with all great elections, to business, to literature, to statesmanship, to preaching, to every degree of status and every zone of vocation in life. If the necessity, the pressure, the touch eternal is not felt, then all your labour is a beating of the air. When some one told Melancthon the ministry was the art of arts, the science of sciences, the sweet-souled

Philip said, "If he had added the misery of miseries, he would have struck the nail upon the head." The very misery is the beginning of the joy. Only a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief could reveal the joy of God : only on Golgotha do men get the right visions of the Holy One. A preacher who has not had his whole heart ploughed up, ripped up, as if by hot ploughshares, cannot talk to men to their edification. He may be a maker of sentences, and a manufacturer of small infidelities, but he cannot preach with the might of tenderest love to the wounds, the sorrows, and the necessities of the soul. This is the reason the Apostle Paul did not resign. He could not resign ; he was the happy slave of a blessed compulsion, and this went through the whole line of his conduct. He could not be ignoble. If the Apostle Paul had tried to do a mean thing, he would have failed ; if the Apostle had ever made up his mind to write an anonymous letter he never would have posted it, he would have broken down in the attempt to be a coward and a poltroon ; he would have erected himself and said, No, it is better for me to die than to try the trick of meanness. He said, Yea, and meant yea ; he said, Nay, and meant nay. He had not learnt the art of diplomacy, the art of courtly lying, the art of saying what you do not mean, the Talleyrand morality that says, "Language was given to a man to conceal his thoughts" ; that was not the school in which the Apostle was trained. He may have been a fanatic, an enthusiast, an infatuated preacher, but he was an honest soul.

Another great principle he lays down in verse 19 :—"For though I be free from all men, yet I have made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more : " unless you make yourselves the servants of others you cannot help them. You cannot help the east end from the west end ; you cannot be doing things from a fine sanctum of elegance, that shall tell upon the remotest fibres and trembling issues and agonies of downright necessity, poverty, or pain ; you must go and be one of the people ; you must live their life, and speak their language, not as an acquired dialect, but as your mother tongue. When the greatest of all slave missionaries went to preach the Gospel to bondsmen he sold himself as a slave. He became a slave that he might save the slaves. He did not preach during the dinner-



hour outside the cotton plantation, he went into the plantation itself, stooped himself down to his work, and whispered his Gospel to anybody that would listen to him. Men who do this do not need to produce testimonials, certificates, reluctantly written by somebody who cannot be found. Let your work speak for you ; let the miracles wrought by your own genius of love attest your heavenly descent : the palm be his who wins it. Do not ask where a man came from, or by what qualification or authority he ministers : ask, what is the harvest grown under his care ? and if it be golden wheat, say, This only could come forth from him who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working.

Here, then, we have Paul's way of treating death. He always despised it. When the people came to him upon one occasion and told him that if he went on a certain course bonds and imprisonment awaited him, he said, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." When the people said, They will bind thee, and the chains are heavy, and the dungeon is cold and dark, he said, "I am willing not to be bound only, but to die for the Lord Jesus." A man who talked so made noble history. He is not to be laughed down by persons who have never sacrificed one solitary enjoyment that they might help some other soul to live. This is the influence that tells upon society in the coming and going of the ages ; and Paul would be the first to tell you that the influence was not his, it was an influence derived. He says, "I am crucified with Christ : nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me : and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." In another prayer, he will exclaim, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." When you praise the Apostle Paul know ye that the anthem is due not to the servant but to the Lord, the living Eternal Christ.

Let young men adopt this as their motto :—It is better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorifying, in truth, and honour, and goodness, void. You may have a struggle,



but you will have a great victory at the end. I have less and less faith in people who get up in the morning without having done anything, and begin to cut down what other men have sown. I like the man who has won every mouthful of bread he eats; I have confidence in the man who tackles life bravely, who had early and tremendous struggles, but who came up with Divine courage every time he was called for; I have faith in the men who have rich, large, noble experience of the realities of things. I know not that I could give to young men a motto nobler than this, when interpreted in the spirit of Christ:—It is better for me to die than that any man should make my glorying in Christ, truth, love, pureness, and beneficence, void. Hold your lives loosely, so far as your mere earthly enjoyment is concerned; look upon your present life as a mere puff of smoke blown away by the wind, so far as *duty* is implicated; and respond to the obligations of reason; and thus find your life, not in your meat, but in your Christian service. I have seen life in all its phases, I know it altogether; I know its deprivations and its enjoyments; I know its desolations and its popularity, I know what men are. Looking at life out of Christ, it is a mystery, a tragedy, a perplexity infinite: looking at life in Christ, it is a pain, a wonder, an apocalypse; but over it there steals, with the quietness of sunrise, the blessed assurance that to be in Christ and to do Christ's work in Christ's spirit makes life the seed, whose fruit is immortality.

## PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY God, it hath pleased thee to make our days but a handful, may we know the number thereof, and turn our hearts unto wisdom. We are to-day like grass in the field, and to-morrow we are cut down, and there is none abiding. The trees outlive us; we go to our own place, and are known no more upon the earth. What is there beyond? What is thy purpose concerning our life? Surely thou art training us for heaven, for larger service, for nobler stature and capacity of being. We believe this, because we have learned it in the school of Christ; this is the meaning of Bethlehem, and this is the meaning of Golgotha: we will not believe that thou dost crush us and extinguish us, we will believe in immortality. Lord, help us by the power of Christ and the ministry of the Holy Spirit so to do. We love the Saviour, and where he is there we shall be also. Did he not say, If it were not so I would have told you? We live upon his word, we stand upon the rock of Christ's assurance; we are confident that we shall say, O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? and that by the power of the Cross, earth shall be but the beginning of heaven. In this confidence may we do our duty, and bear our burdens, and fulfil the responsibilities of the day; out of this will come patience, tender, considerate, and heroic; yea, out of this shall come such fulness and richness of manhood that we shall not only be without fear ourselves, we shall be the ministers of courage and hope unto others. We leave ourselves always wholly in thine hands, thou Father of us all. Thou knowest the way that we take, when thou hast tried us thou wilt bring us forth as gold. Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, yea, he scourgeth every son whom he receiveth, that his sonship may be decided and established. Help us to accept all the deprivations and enjoyments of life as specially sent of God for the training, the culture, and the immortality of blessing promised to our souls. We would not live incidentally, superficially, despairingly; we would live as those to whom heaven is a blessed, it may be an imminent, reality. Save us from all meanness, lowness of thought, selfishness of motive and of purpose; and to this end may we know the power of the sufferings of Christ when he died upon the Cross. Amen.

### 1 Corinthians xi. 14.

"Doth not even nature itself teach you?"

### THE TEACHINGS OF NATURE.

THE Apostle is speaking about a particular subject; it is of no interest to us: but the principle which he lays down is of perpetual value and application. I wish to lure you into

two or three simple admissions. The church in which we assemble built itself. I want you to admit that simple statement to be true. No human hand touched it; whether it came down, or whether it rose up from the earth, it is impossible to say; but precisely as it now stands it was found by those who occupy it. No man built it, no man touched it, no man charged for it; the whole edifice came to earth just as we see it. Do you receive the statement with a smile? Why should you do so? There may be more in the admission or supposition than you expect. Be careful how you admit anything at any time. Things are so connected one with another that, in talking the commonest speech, you may be committing yourselves to the most subtle and complicated scheme of metaphysics. Let me then make a less demand upon your imagination, and get you to admit that, if the church did not build itself, the pulpit did. That is a much smaller area, and therefore will tax, in proportionate degree, much less of your credulity and imagination. The pulpit came up out of the earth or descended from the roof, we cannot tell which; but here it is: no man touched it, no tool fashioned it, no fingers polished it; but just as you see it, it came to be. Do you still smile? Do you think I would lead you into fooldom, and tease and torture you with your own folly? Then let me circumscribe still more, and say that if the church did not build itself, or the pulpit did not build itself, the glass in one of the windows made itself. Let us circumscribe still further and say one of the panes; let us still further circumscribe and say, the very smallest pane of glass in this building made itself. Now how do we stand? Just as badly as ever; I cannot get any one to assent to these propositions. If you think it worth while to condemn them you simply dismiss them with a sneer, or turn aside from them with most suggestive indifference.

You have a theory, which has sometimes led you into trouble. Your theory is to believe nothing that transcends the circle of positive human experience. Within the four corners of that theory you are prepared to believe largely, but beyond the four corners of that theory you will not go one inch. So you exclude miracles, supernaturalism, inspiration, the unseen universe, God. You take rank with those philosophers who are experiential; they

subject every theory, suggestion, proposition to the test of actual human experience, saying, Has man ever known anything like this? Does this thing come within our experience and observation? Can we subject it to the test of our hands? Will it confine itself within the bounds of our reason? If not, we dismiss it; therefore we take up all books of divinity, according to Hume's suggestion, and we simply commit them to the flames. Our theory, say you, is the theory of experience. So you will not believe that the church built itself, that the pulpit built itself, or that the smallest pane of glass in the windows of the church made itself; you have never known any such self-making in any department of life; the very suggestion of self-making in these directions excites the resentment of your reason. So be it. Let us go away from the church altogether.

Above us, around us, beneath us, there is a great structure called the universe: I propose that we say it made itself. What do you say in reply to that suggestion? Let us circumscribe and say, If the whole universe of the telescope did not make itself, our own little world is self-made. Again you pause, again I cannot get you to assent to my suggestion; then let us try within more circumscribed limits to get some assent to this theory of self-creation, let us pluck a blade of grass from the meadow and say, This one blade is its own creator. You will not even admit so small a proposition as that; you are as consistent in your denials with regard to the universe, the earth, and the grass as you were with regard to the church, the pulpit, and the window pane. What do you know about nature? That is a very common word in the books of the day. Suppose a man should come to the city and write a book about it, and suppose that he should state in the preface of the book that he has only stood at one street-corner of the city, and has seen nothing of the city beyond what he could see from that position; and he has written an elaborate treatise about the metropolis. He has never seen its libraries, its galleries of art; he has never walked through its museums, or inspected its historical and monumental buildings; he has simply stood at one street-corner, and taken in as much as he could by glancing round from right to left, and he has written a large book upon the metropolis of England.

What would you think of him? Would you buy the book? You would not even borrow it. Yet this is very much more than anybody has done in relation to God's great city of the universe. We have not even stood at one little street-corner in it; yet we tell what the universe is, and what nature is, and what nature can do, and has done, and will do. It is very impertinent! Were a man to publish what he had seen from his own street-corner he would be acting legitimately and reasonably: were men to say all they now know about the little piece of nature that has come under their survey, they, too, would be acting in a rational manner. Beyond that, however, they must not go. We know nothing about nature beyond a very limited line; and what there is in the further nature, the deeper, loftier, grander nature, that shall modify and rectify and explain the little portion of nature we do know, no man can tell.

You acknowledge that the church must have been built by some one; you acknowledge that the universe must have had a maker or a making; and you say you do not know who made it. Very well: what does that matter? That is of no consequence. You do not know who made the glass that is in your windows at home. Who was he? You cannot tell. What is his name? You never heard it. Where was he born? Impossible to say. And yet you believe it was made; you cannot get out of that admission. But your agnosticism amounts to nothing. If you really and truly wanted to find out the man you would at least make some inquiry about him; you could at least fee a detective; if you wanted to find out who made the universe, you could at all events reverently inquire. The main point is that we admit that this universe must have been made. Deny that it was made as a whole: what does that amount to? Nothing. If you taunt Paley and his followers with the suggestion that they only remove the inquiry one step backward, so do we taunt all other men who are supposed to deny the Divine creatorship of the universe. Say the universe came out of a speck, a germ, a tuft of fire-mist—who made it? It takes as much wisdom to account for one little tuft of fire-mist as to account for the universe. It may take even more, for how wondrous must have been that little cloud of fiery particles out

of which came all constellations, all systems, all things great, beautiful, musical, majestic, tender! Who hid in so small a receptacle wonders so infinite, so dazzling? No matter therefore what your theory of making is, and no matter whether you say the universe was made by a Secret, an Energy, a Force, you still come to the grand religious point. Whether that point can be amplified, put into words, set in a broader aspect before your mind, is a question which for the moment may be reserved: enough has been admitted to give us a teaching nature when it is admitted that according to human experience nothing known to men ever made itself; therefore the universe, if it is to be accepted as a fact, must be accepted according to the limits of this doctrine of experience. This might be enough to begin with.

Now let us see how much of a Bible we can make for ourselves. We have human experience bearing evidence in a certain direction, we have a universe as the basis of induction and inference; we will not listen to prating theologians, to pedantic divines who have learned lessons from books and are reciting them from treacherous memories! we will have nothing to do with the brood theological: we will write a book upon what we do see of the universe that is round about us. Now, begin! Shall I dictate what you write, and will you stop me the moment you cannot assent to what I dictate? Let that be the understanding between us for a moment. Thus then would I dictate the new Bible:—Whoever made this universe must have infinite strength—or say, in equal words, infinite power. It is a big thing to have made. It is so broad, deep, so cubic; it measures in every direction, length, breadth, depth, height, diametrically, diagonally: how full of measure! That is verse 1. Verse 2 read thus:—Whoever made this universe must have continuing strength enough to keep it going. This is not the work of some giant, who in a moment of spasmodic strength threw off the miracle of creation; there is abiding, sustaining, providential strength in the maker of this universe, be he man or angel, God or devil, personality or influence and energy. Science tells us that there are orbits, circles of movement, so great that the orbit made by our solar system would lie upon their infinite distances like a straight line. No wheel goes



wrong, no planet makes a noise as it drives its chariot through the fields of immensity. The stars have all been there, not according to the theologians, but according to the men of science—thousands of years. That would be a mean time. Tens of thousands of years? You scarcely relieve the meanness even by that heightening suggestion. Millions of years, billions countless. Put down therefore as the second verse in the Bible suggested by nature, that whoever or whatever made this universe must have continuing strength to sustain it.

Put another verse down:—Whoever or whatever made the universe constantly utilises danger as an element in education, This is a great school, and it is full of peril, and this peril is utilised as an agent or instrument in the education of the whole human family. We learn by what we suffer; we are made cautious by what we fear. A yard off there may be a bottomless pit; near at hand there may be devouring fire. We are led, therefore, constantly to look out, to study, to consider, to test by careful experiment. If we put our hand into the fire, we are burned; there is poison in the very air; the next little plant I pluck for my hunger may kill me because it is a poison-flower. The lightning may be sleeping, but it is never absent; it may strike the proudest tower and level the proudest town: I must take care how I build, I must bribe that dangerous fluid if I can; I must offer it the hospitality of iron that it may be conducted away from the tower into the ditch. Nature herself has taught us thus much. We cannot riot and be wanton in nature. Nature hath her constables, nature hath her code of laws and her register of punishments, her magistrates and judges, and her gaols and hulks and penal settlements. “Doth not even nature itself teach you” that life is subject to continual danger, and that danger is to be regarded as an element in the culture of our judgment and in the distribution and control of our faculties?

Put down another verse. We are getting now, I see, a rather useful Bible without the aid of the theologians at all. Whoever made or whatever made this universe has established within it the principle of obedience. If we do not obey we die; if we disobey we die. We make no laws except little ones, subsidiary

laws, mere transcripts of the great ordinances of nature. We must obey. Doth not even nature herself teach you so? And we must obey the sun. The sun settles all your customs and habits. You may not have thought of that, but everything even in your civilisation goes right back to the sun. When George Stephenson said that the engine that was flying across the landscape was being driven by light he was right. That same light drives all the engines of civilisation. The sun tells you what coat to put on. Do not distress yourself as to how you will dress your poor body; the sun will settle that. Here let us suppose is a burning summer day and a man is going to put on his very thickest top coat. His children laugh. I am not now speaking of instances of infirmity or of any special and unique instances of feebleness, I am speaking of the broad customs of society. The sun settles your wardrobe. And you must obey the sun in the food you take. What is good in one climate is intolerable in another; consult the sun. The sun determines what kind of houses you will build; the sun is the architect. In some climates he permits you to build wooden shanties, and they are quite enough; in other countries he forbids any such poor building, and says, You must build in this country of granite. And you cannot help it. Freemen!—bondmen. The sun settles all business. The merchant has to look up to the sun to see what he must buy next, how his next speculation is to run; there is one speculation for summer and another speculation for winter, and all the shop-windows simply say where the sun is. Sometimes the sun seems to play them rather vexatious tricks. Still, he is the sun and he settles the profits of Regent-street. Regent-street can never get over one thorough wet day. A wondrous nature. Can we not do double business the next day? No. If there has been one day lost by rain it can never be recovered.

Doth not even nature itself teach thee? Is there not something more in all this? Have we not here a field of vivid and practical suggestion? We might continue the inquiry along all directions. Suppose therefore now we terminate our dictation of the new Bible, because the Bible, as we know it, has been put into our hands. Now we are prepared in some degree to read it. What does it say? It says:—"In the beginning God created the heaven

and the earth"; and we say, Blessed be his name! It does look as if this might be true; it seems as if it were worthy of God, so great, so bright, so wondrous, so adapted in part to part, so silent, yet so musical; it may be true, "And God said, Let there be light": it looks as if he might have said so, the light is so beautiful, so glorious, so silent. It fills all things, yet takes up no room; it does not displace the tiniest child from the tiniest chair. It may be God's light; it shines as brightly upon the poor man's cottage as upon the monarch's palace; it kisses as tenderly the poor man's one little window-flower as it does the radiant, glowing parterre in the king's garden: it may be that God did make this light. "God said, Let us make man": he may have done so; man is so strange, so complex, so wondrous altogether: now an angel, now almost a demon; now writing his *Iliad* and his *Paradise Lost*, and now degrading himself into the lowest, basest life, and then suddenly springing up into song and prayer, and stretching out eloquent hands to condescending heaven. God may have made us! The Christian believer has no difficulty in stepping from nature to nature's God. The Christian believer has no difficulty in going up from providence to redemption. The Christian believer does not discard reason, he takes up his reason under the wings of his faith. The Christian believer finds no difficulty in saying to Christ, "My Lord, and my God": and in saying this he does not give up his reason, he sanctifies it, he turns it to its divinest uses. The Christian believer has no doubt or difficulty about the miracles of Christ; the miracles were in the hem of his garment, in every tone of his voice, in the glance of his gentle or rebuking eyes. He himself was the supreme miracle, and all lesser miracles fall out of him as gentle showers from the infinite clouds. Let us abide in this faith; let us rest and content ourselves as in a divine sanctuary. Let nature herself be our first teacher, and if we submit ourselves to her eloquent lessons, so patiently given, there shall come in upon us another voice, and yet not another,—the voice that made nature will interpret nature, and the voice that made nature will not keep heaven from us.

## 1 Corinthians xi. 23.

"The same night in which he was betrayed."

### THE NIGHT OF BETRAYAL.

THESE words were used by the Apostle Paul. There is a word put in—"The same night in which he was betrayed"; omit the word "same"—"The night in which he was betrayed." Events make time memorable. Our sufferings are our birthdays, or our burial-days, or our resurrection-days, according to the view we are enabled to take of them whilst we tarry beside the all-engulfing and all-sanctifying woe of Christ. There is a subtle music in the very words. We could not have read—"The morning in which he was betrayed: the glorious summer noontide in which he was betrayed." It is better thus: the night, the darkness, the gloom, the midnight involved in midnight, in which he was betrayed. But this is only one view, and it is only our view. We are shocked with a great surprise. Even the verbal fitness of things adds to our soul's disquiet. What view did Jesus Christ himself take of the night in which he was betrayed? What did he do? That is the very point. How did he use that darkness? Did he accept it as a signal of despair, and say, I have failed, and must return whence I came? Properly read, these words are the beginning of the sublimest revelation of Christ's character. "The same night in which he was betrayed"—he was overwhelmed? No. He yielded himself to the malign spell of despair? No: He "took bread." He was always taking bread that he might give it. He would be great in darkness; the tragedy shall but reveal his majesty. What did Jesus Christ do the same night in which he was betrayed? He founded a sacrament; the simplest of feasts, a memorial banquet; and he said, As often as ye gather around this table ye gather around your Lord; and as oft as ye

do this simple deed you do it in remembrance of me." Is that all? No,—“in remembrance” takes us back away over the stony road of our yesterdays when we did all the sin, and committed all the folly; and this sacrament is intended to do more—it is to show forth the Lord's death till he come. There is the future, the road we have never travelled, the unstained, unsullied path, the road of sunbeams and flowers, without a footprint but his own. This he did on the same night in which he was betrayed. He thought of his Church, he arranged the feast, suiting his own simplicity, he set up a memorial beautiful as love, and simple as the thought of a child; he condescended to poverty, so that any man who has one crumb of bread can eat the Lord's body. This was no feast for kings of wealth, for sons of splendour and children of luxury; it was the world's simple but ample board. Wherever there is bread—and there is bread wherever there is life—the Lord's death can be set forth till he come. Then he was not overwhelmed? Contrariwise, he was prophetic, poetic, victorious; the only quiet, noble, royal heart in the midst of the gathering gloom.

Not only did he take bread, he “gave thanks.” He looked up where he was always looking. It is the upward look that saves you; the upward look is the cure for dizziness, the upward look shows the vastness of things; what you want is never down, it is always up and beyond, the stars being a mere trellis-work through which you catch gleamings of the splendour which is fitted for your soul's vision alone. Never was Jesus so great as on the night in which he was betrayed. He took the simple wine of the supper table, and made it blood, and called it the new covenant. Whoever can take a draught of water from the spring can drink Christ's blood. The man cannot turn the water into wine, but Christ can. Whatever you have, if you take it in the right spirit, it is the right thing; and whatever luxury you may have, if you take it in the wrong spirit, it is poison. If you cannot afford one mouthful of milk, take one mouthful of water, and in that water you will find the Lord's blood. Do not be led away by prosaic minds, those fools that spoil the garden, and say, How can this be so? Say, Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things? art thou a rational being, and



art thou degrading all God's poetry into this mean prose? The thing is what it is made by the thought, the motive, the spirit, the love. There are those who find great things in things that are small. Even the child finds the baby in her doll. There are those who see great sights in flowers that are burning but not consumed; there are minds that halt in all their urgency and forget all their need in the presence of a dawning day. "Things would be greater if we greater deemed them." If we said, "There is nothing common or unclean in God's house, all the universe is his, and there is nothing in it that is not pure," we should find more purity than we should ever find through the medium of our criticism and pedantry. To the pure all things are pure; to the good, true, honest heart all bread is sacramental, all water is symbolic of the blood of Christ, and every day is an opening into the eternity out of which all days come, as rain-drops fall from the rain-clouds. Thus the Lord set in that darkness a glowing star, whose solemn splendour shall rule the thought of men till stars are needed no longer, until the face of the Lord shall become the one light and the one glory of creation.

Is this all that he did on the night in which he was betrayed? No. What more did the Lord do on that memorable night? He sang a hymn. That proved him to be Lord. No other soul could have sung that night; that darkness would not have brought music into any other heart; that black curtain would have shut out God from any eyes but Christ's. The Lord and the little Church sang together. To have heard that hymn!—minor, low, pensive, tremulous, grand because of self-suppression, saying more to the ear of the imagination than could be said to the ear of flesh. "They had sung an hymn." That old English suits the occasion better than your new-made grammar would ever do. It makes the occasion venerable and tender with a subtle melancholy. Old age lingers around the scene; this grey moss makes the table old as eternity. We sing our hymns at mid-day, our psalms are all retrospective; the trouble we came out of, the rivers we were taken across, the seas that were divided as we approached them,—these are the subjects of our modern psalmody; but to be singing while the gathering darkness is descending is



really to praise God. The doxology should be an intermediate as well as a final act of worship ; when the stroke falls the tongue should sing,—“ I will sing as long as I live : my song shall be of mercy and judgment ; unto thee, O Lord, will I sing.” We are greater in gratitude—and we are never very great in that—than we are in trust. Give us to feel that not a feather has been taken away out of our nest, and we are willing to sing a doxology : give us to feel that the nest is being torn up and scattered on the winds, and where is our hallelujah ? What shall be said concerning us when we think of the night in which we were ruined ?

On that solemn occasion, after the Lord had discoursed about his betrayal, the disciples said one to another and to the Lord, “ Is it I ? ” Yes, it is every one of us. Who betrayed the Lord ? Everybody. There must always be one hand objective and concrete that does the deed, but it is only done representatively : it is a question of agency. It was not the hand of Iscariot that did it, else Christ had fallen a prey to a plot : it was Man that did it ; therefore Christ submitted to the sacrifice. Jesus was not worsted by a gang of murderers : all the men that ever lived, and that ever are to live, gathered together in that one infernal representation, and betrayed the Lord when Iscariot kissed him. Iscariot is nobody ; Iscariot is but a speck of dust that could have been cast off ; but the Lord would not cast off Man, for then had he cast off his own image, and disavowed his own signature, and laid himself prostrate before the conquering work of his own hands. Let us not adopt the shuffling piety that says, “ Is it I ? ” either the question of an imperfect consciousness, or the question of a doubly-involved and unpardonable cowardice. There are those who would keep aloof from Iscariot. Why ? We may not stand one inch away from that black character. He did what we wanted to do, and what we ourselves did. Thus again God’s great gleaming axe is flying down to the root of the tree of our respectability, and we stand in one condemnation before God. Let us repeat the common-place that, as amongst ourselves and between ourselves, there are good men and bad men, faithful men and unfaithful men : but as before God what is there ? Only one human nature. There are those who have found that human nature to be very excellent, and they have done every-

thing to establish that doctrine except proving it. They have praised it and repeated it and lauded it and magnified it and revelled in it: we have simply, quietly, and hopelessly waited for the proof.

But, supposing that we are anxious to press the matter personally and say, "Lord, is it I?" even there we can be gratified. Do you remember the time when you had an opportunity of speaking for Christ, and lost it? it was then that you betrayed the Lord. He was looking on, he was expecting a heroic defence, and you were criminally silent. Pray do not abuse Iscariot. Do you remember the time when two courses were set before you, the one dishonourable but leading to immediate wealth, the other honourable but meaning strenuous endeavour and doubtful success in a worldly sense, and you paused, and then took the course that led to pelf and pleasure, to gluttony and suicide? It was then, though you did not speak one word, that you betrayed the Lord. Do you remember making a selfish use of your Christianity, pawning your certificate of Church membership that you might receive some little dole of influence or praise, some small recognition of honour? It was then that you betrayed the Lord. Do you remember wriggling over the words—"He that taketh not up his cross"—do you remember trying to make them mean something else? do you remember your resort to the subtle grammarians who might help you out of the Cross by paving some way across to self-indulgence? Do you remember when criticism collided with criticism, and you accepted the one that involved the least pain and the least surrender and the least sacrifice? Think! it was then that you betrayed the Lord. Do you remember that night when you had two gifts in your hands, the one tolerably large and the other very small, and you said, Which shall I give? and the devil said, Begin by giving the little one: and you said falteringly, No, no, and he said, Certainly: and you put the larger donation back into your purse? It was then you lost the fight; after that the devil took you by the throat and shook you, and led you about whither he would; and the devil is never very dainty as to how he lays his terrific fingers upon the throat of man. Ever since then he could have sold you in any market; ever

since then he laid his black hand upon your head and chuckled over you and said, This is the one that I fooled when he was parleying before the Cross.

We have not one of us betrayed the Lord in all points. There is the danger. We run off at points. There is hardly a man who has not some speck of respectability, some little redeeming point, some one excellence, which he can speak of and magnify and put up to public view. Would God sin were one huge black vice! we might escape it; if it were one overshadowing beast, fiercer than all tigers, we might run away: but sin is thick as the air is full of motes, as the sunbeam is crowded with specks of dust; we breathe them; we shut our mouths, and yet inhale them; we call it fresh air and are yet poisoned by them. Sin hath a thousand forms, yea ten thousand times ten thousand forms, and a man is not to be found, probably, who has submitted to sin in every form and in every aspect. Great Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, there are some chaste men who stand aside to let the poor drunkard go past: whereas he is a purer man than is the chastity that stands aloof from him. And there are some Pharisees in thy Church, O living Christ, who would not for the world utter a profane word, who are telling lies all day long. You may betray your friend, and yet not speak of him in wholesale disrespectfulness. A man may admire you, praise your genius, stand in awe of your fine intellectual capacity, and yet all the while may be robbing you. Where is the point of betrayal? Not in the admiration but in the robbery. A man may help you, and at the same time may slander you when you are not present; a man may know you in sunshine but he may never call upon you in adversity—he betrays you. We betray a friend when we reveal his secrets, when we abuse his confidence, when we lead him into complications. It is easy to betray. A faithful man who can find? an honest white soul that says the same thing on both sides of the door, a downright frank spirit that cannot lie, cannot even look a lie? If judgment begin at the house of God, where shall the ungodly and the sinner be? The word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow, and there is not a thought hidden in the

plasm of the soul that it does not find out and examine and pronounce upon.

The Lord is being betrayed every morning, every noonday, every twilight, every midnight. We live to betray him. It is a gainful process of betraying him. We may betray him by professing him; the certificate would not have carried us through but for the sprinkled water of Christian baptism, but for the punctuation of Christian profession, but for the clerical signature. The other side is one of hope. We come to the eternal principle that if we can say from our hearts, Lord, all the preacher has said is true, and a thousand other things he might have said without exaggerating the truth: but, Lord Jesus, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that though my heart is often the house of devils, still I love thee; Jesus, Son of God, thou knowest that though there is no man out of hell that is so familiar with the pit as I am, yet thou knowest that I love thee. This is the tragedy of human consciousness and human experience. These are realities we can only approach after a lifetime of education, a lifetime of struggle, a lifetime of loss—the kind of loss that prepares the soul for gain. Remember, the same night in which he was betrayed the Lord founded a sacrament, and sang a hymn, and set two new stars in the coronet of night. The Lord conquered in the very act of falling. When he died he became victor. He said to a wondering universe—"Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die." He then planted one ear of wheat. To-day he fills the wheatfields of the universe with golden grain. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.

## PRAYER.

**LORD**, abide with us, for it is toward evening and the day is far spent. Come into our hearts, and break bread to our soul's hunger, and we shall know of a surety that it is the Lord. We are hungered, and we are smitten with thirst in the world; we cannot find satisfaction to our best desire; we have hewn out to ourselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water: God pity us, God be merciful unto us sinners. We come to thy house that we may see heaven; we draw near to God that we may receive pardon. We long for forgiveness; it means release and liberty and hope and progress. If we confess our sins, thou art faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We confess all our sins; we confess them at the Cross; and we behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. The Lord pity us, the Lord cleanse us, through the precious blood of Christ. We come for light, we come for help; we are often in great darkness, our life is a constant need: Lord, guide us with thine eye, and feed us with thine hand. Amen.

### 1 Corinthians xiii. 1-6.

1. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

2. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

3. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

4. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.

5. Doth nor behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

6. Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.

### THE ESSENTIALS OF CHARITY.

**W**E have opinions by the thousand in number, and every one sharp as a bristle; but that is not enough. We have controversy; some men have no greatness but in debate, their whole genius expires in the fray of words, in the foam of easily forgettable eloquence. What we want, according to the testimony of the Apostle, is love. Is that all? Yes, that is all.

Love comes first, and love comes last, and love reaches all the intermediate space, but the love at the last is not the same altogether as the love at the first: it is richer in quality, it is wider in intelligence, it is more heroic in spirit; it is the same love, and yet not the same—as the blossom is not the root, yet without the root there could be no blossom. If we believed this chapter we should all be converted men; we should drop all our present method of doing things, and startle the world by the originality of unselfishness.

This chapter should be read in one breath. If you halt in the reading of it you seem to miss a great deal. All the words are hyphenated, and the whole deliverance is one urgent burst of eulogy. It comes in here quite in a Pauline manner. Paul had no little rules of rhetoric; when he wanted rhetoric he made it; he was not the slave of your small syntactical accuracy; he rushed, sometimes he plunged like a cataract, and sometimes he flowed like a deep broad river. Here he has been arguing about a good many things; he was going to settle things. All men have their moments of weakness; so Paul became a kind of ecclesiastical housekeeper, and he would arrange matters, he would descend to exhortation: and suddenly he gathered himself together, and became a new man, as if to say, What does all this amount to? This is mechanical, arbitrary: what you want is inspiration, the spirit; and the name of that spirit is Love. Where there is an abundance of love all the housekeeping goes easily, whether it be a little cottage or a great palace or a church comprehending multitudinousness of character, opinion, and force. Where there is no love there can be no reliance upon the easy working of the machinery; you may have compromise and concession, and a policy of give-and-take, but not until love rules the spirit will the life settle into rich, massive, worthy music. We should all be found offering homage to a different altar if we believed this chapter. We now worship “tongues,” “prophecies,” “mysteries,” and small miracles of almsgiving. This exhortation was peculiarly seasonable in the case of the Corinthian Church. Nearly everybody in Corinth was either a good speaker or a good hearer; it was the city of eloquence. Paul having heard eloquent declamation said, All this amounts to



nothing, unless it be backed up by an infinity of love. And when he heard faulty, hesitant speaking, speaking almost contemptible for its stumbling and feebleness, he said, This kind of speaking will tell in the long run, if there be behind it the love that suffers long and is kind. Love wins. Be not tired of love. This same Apostle says, "Be not weary in well doing." What does "well doing" mean there, in the language which Paul employed? We now take that as a text, and preach upon it to Sunday-school teachers and to tract-distributors and to various agents and servants of the Church; and with rational unction and legitimate persistency we say, Be not weary in well doing: keep on teaching your young, giving away your literature, and helping men to live better: be not weary in well doing. That is right: but that is not what Paul said. When he said "well doing" he meant, Be not weary in courtesy, graciousness of manner, complacency of spirit, the way that is suave, conciliatory, yea I will repeat—for that is the word which holds the whole meaning—gracious. Men will go down in courtesy before they go down in morality. That is the mystery of our human nature. We break away at points, and many a man becomes bearish who does not become absolutely dishonest in the market-place. He tires of gentleness, he says he will be no longer gracious, he will try another policy. He has no right to try any other policy, for that is the Divine policy; and he has no right to be weary in it, and he must keep on being gracious, courteous, tender, sympathetic to the end: be not weary in love. Many a man will set himself up as a very distinguished and even model moralist who has a bitter tongue, and an evil and satirical way of speaking about other people. What about his morality? It is rubbish, it is rotten through and through; all over his face he has painted the ten commandments, and he has written a commandment on each finger and thumb, he is all commandments together, but he is no child of God: why? Because he has become weary in love, bitter in speech, unkindly in spirit; he has lost the nobleness of charity. We cannot allow that man to address the Church. He is too moral in his own esteem.

The Apostle then calls upon us to believe that unless we have love everything else goes for nothing. He does not depreciate

other things, but he values all other things in proportion as they are charged by the spirit of love, and directed by loving purpose; and where there is an absence of other things, that absence is forgotten in the presence of overflowing love. Let there be a child in God's kingdom rather than a philosopher. If you cannot be both, be the child. "He that receiveth a little child in my name receiveth me." That holy Speaker never said, He that receives a philosopher with great pomp of hospitality receives the whole Trinity. Never! He did say, "Whosoever receiveth one such little child"—and there was quite a number of these little creatures round about him—"in my name receives the Christ of God"; and he who receives the Christ of God receives God himself, and turns his house into a heaven. If we could believe this we should banish controversy, we should get rid of contention: we should no longer see man fighting man on ecclesiastical ground; the Church would cease to be a bear-garden, and would become the abode of peace. Of course there are those who do not understand the meaning of love in this connection; they think of it as implying carelessness, indifference, reluctance to meddle with anything or discuss with anybody, a total disregard of variety, of judgment, opinion, and argument; and they look upon love in this connection as simply signifying a very beautiful but a very futile sentiment. Those who talk so never knew what love can really do. Every man is born again when he feels the first touch of love. He rises to another level, he sees life and all things from another standpoint, he alters the whole standard of judgment, and his strength—rugged, tremendous power—is sanctified and chastened and utilised in the most beauteous forms. Love uplifts a soul. Love will last longer than law; love can sit up all night, and in the morning can so graciously deceive itself as to say that it is not tired. Love will save us, where argument will only irritate, confound, and destroy.

We must go into this description a little; but it would be more profitable for us to conduct what little analysis or criticism is necessary in private rather than in public. But first of all, the Apostle gets rid of all genius, mental power, pretence of mental eminence,—yea he gets rid of all almsgiving and all

self-martyrdom. The Apostle had a tremendous fist. Whatever he struck reeled under the stunning blow. He comes into all these little pomps and ceremonies by the right of birth, by the right of merit. When some men try to take down the Church they seem to be doing something beyond their strength: when Paul undertakes to remove, to rebuke, to set things in their right relation, he works with the dignity of a master, and with the ease of one who could produce his credentials if called upon to do so. It is Paul therefore, and not Peter, who sets aside great speaking, great thinking, fine utterance, and even charity of a visible and palpable kind; it is Paul who puts his foot on the smoking ashes of self-martyrdom, and says, All this is useless: what about your love, your self-sacrifice, your living in the spirit of Christ? Where is the cross on which you died for other lives?

Trying myself by this standard, and inflicting myself in so doing with cruel yet righteous humiliation, I have endeavoured to reverse the process. Thus:—"Love suffereth long, and is kind." Do I suffer long? Am I kind with it all? No; I break down at the "kind." The long-suffering may be beyond my control, I cannot get things straightened and rectified and put into musical relation and form: I have suffered twenty, thirty years and more from this; so that if I have suffered long, have I love? No; that is the point of self-deception. Love suffereth long, and is through it all sweet, kind, courteous, gracious, uncomplaining; there is not a reproach upon its tongue, there is not one drop of bitterness in its gentle heart. Ah me! if that be so, I have no love.

"Charity envieth not." Do I envy? This is not the refrain of a song, this is the discipline of a soul. Do I envy that brother who is doing more than I am doing; that merchant who is making his fortune more rapidly than I am making mine in my slow-going business? Do I envy the gifts, the adornments, the accomplishments, and the honours of some other man? Do I? Soul, tell no lies to thyself! Yes, I envy. I do not want to envy. I would cut the throat of that foul knave, but no steel is keen enough to shed its blood: my God, God of the Cross, help

me! I thought I had charity when all things were according to my will, when I was the supreme person, when I had nothing to envy, when I could simply look down upon all other people and wonder at their littleness; but when I saw some one greater, truer, grander—O my Saviour! I felt something shoot through my heart that made hell there. Then I have not love. But if I have the tongues of men and of angels, will not that stand me in good stead? No. Thou envious man, thou evil soul, thy heart is a nest of foul birds, thou dost not know the Cross. But I am strong on doctrine! That is useless. I had held up my hand in church assembly to expel heretics. That is worthless; it is only an aggravation of thine abominableness: thou hast envy! My Lord, after this, who can be saved? Are there few that be saved?

“Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly,”—never goes to the front seat as if by right, never treats the weak as if they were a nuisance, never lifts itself up in self-reliant pomp, or displays itself in the circumstance of glittering ostentation: charity, love, will sit down anywhere, and not do that ostentatiously. There is a sitting-down in the back seat which means, Look at me now: how extremely humble I am! It only sits down there because there is no other seat vacant. That is not love; that is calculated modesty, that first writes its name and then blots it out. Charity is not swollen, inflated, wind-driven; love is simple, frank, self-unconscious, asks with a child’s transparency of soul, What is the next thing to be done? If I can do it, here I am. But that man has no views about predestination! Blessed be God then; let him come farther up. That man takes no interest whatever in the controversies of the fourth century: how can he be saved? That man listens to the doctors in the temple, disputing with one another with most impious ferocity, and says in language they deem profane, What is all this Babel about? What then is his claim to attention? Why do the angels gather around him as around a shining spot? Because his soul is the habitation of love.

Love “seeketh not her own.” That is the crucial point. Some

most unselfish and noble souls will allow you to do whatever you like in the house if you do not touch their particular armchair. You have seen such generous hosts. Men have said, How kind, how ample in hospitality! Yes; but if you watch all the twenty-four hours round you will see that their self-oblivious love always holds itself in its own little corner.

"Is not easily provoked." Why, we take offence as quick as lightning. We say we are sensitive. O Christ of God, thou wast lacking in sensitiveness! When men smote thee on one cheek, thou didst turn the other also; when thou wast reviled, thou reviledst not again; when thou didst suffer thou didst not threaten; thou didst give thy back to the smiters, and thy cheeks to them that plucked off the hair! Oh, where was thy sensitiveness, Man of Golgotha, Victim of Calvary?

"Thinketh no evil." Who can follow this music? who can beat time to it? who can be part of it? There are men who have no genius but in evil thinking. They can always tell you why other people do certain things; their minds are perfectly fecundant, infinite, in the abundance of suggestion regarding evil motives. They know why others stand up and sit down; why they challenge public attention, why they vary usual methods of treating all the institutions of the country; they can always tell you the motive, and it is never a good one. Charity "thinketh no evil."

"Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." Oh this universality of genius! "Charity never faileth." Yet the Church can expel members, and never look after them. I have seen heretics driven out of the Church, and heard the church-door bang after them, and not a soul ever went out to say, Oh, poor exiled one, come back! He would have come back if we had bidden him. I saw him. He looked to see if anybody was coming after him, and he saw nothing—his soul was in desolation.



## PRAYER.

O THOU God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we would be swallowed up in thy love ! We bless thee for this desire ; this desire is of thine own creation ; we were once as sheep going astray, but now by thy grace we have returned unto the shepherd and bishop of our souls. This is the miracle of grace ; this is the triumph of the Cross. May this desire grow upon us, until we live and move and have our being in God, not of necessity, but by our own loving consent ; then shall we be as the angels of God, there shall be no time, no space, no burdensomeness ; we shall live in God's own great eternity. Towards this we are moving by the Spirit ; hitherto we have been little, foolish, frivolous, looking for small mercies and often missing them, but now our eyes are unto the hills ; not the little hills of earth and time, but to the everlasting hills of light and glory and summer : our help cometh from the Lord. We bless thee for all thy care and love ; thou hast made our houses homes, sweet, quiet dwelling-places, and that we have been enabled to find in our own fireside a hint of the ever-burning fire on the altar. We thank thee for sleep, for communion with one another in all holy and tender speech ; we thank thee for the bread which perisheth and the water of earthly fountains, and these we have taken sacramentally, as if eating the body and drinking the blood of the Lord's anointed. Inasmuch as we have had to go down into the rough world and the tumultuous market-place, thou hast been with us there ; thou hast prospered us in basket and in store to some extent, and thou hast returned us to our houses glad that the bustling conflict was over, and thankful that the spirit of rest was brooding once more over our aching lives. We thank thee for all our hopes ; the worlds are nearer than we thought, heaven's fragrance attempers the winds of earth, we almost hear the upper song : may we listen for it, may our souls delight in sweet anticipations of immortal fellowship, and may we come out of these high reveries determined to work more, suffer more patiently, to accept every discipline more willingly, and to do all our little day's work as men whose citizenship is in heaven. Amen.

### 1 Corinthians xiii. 7-13.

7. Charity beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

8. Charity never faileth : but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail ; whether there be tongues, they shall cease ; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

9. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

10. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.



11. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child : but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

12. For now we see through a glass, darkly ; but then face to face : now I know in part ; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

13. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three ; but the greatest of these is charity.

## TWO CHILDHOODS.

THE concrete form of the doctrine of this chapter is to be found in the incident of the young man who came to Jesus Christ and asked how he might inherit eternal life. The young man was attractive in appearance, persuasive in voice, comely altogether, so much so that Jesus loved him, as you might love a flower. The young man was filled with the spirit of reverence and homage ; kneeling before the Master, he asked, " What shall I do to inherit eternal life ? " What hast thou done ? " Everything." Name what thou hast done. " I have kept all the commandments from my youth up." Then said Jesus, " One thing thou lackest." But why turn the young man away because of the lack of one thing ? why not take the eleven things which he does possess, and not raise into such exaggerated importance the twelfth element which is missing ? This is the way of God. He must have life, and there is no life but in love ; he says the meanest little child that crawls in the lowest dust is infinitely greater than the finest marble that does everything but speak. " One thing thou lackest"—lacking that, thou hast nothing. Thy respectability must be made into a virtue, thy virtue must be lifted into piety, and thy piety must be heightened into sacrifice. " One thing thou lackest"—fair, well-trained, well-informed, educated with amazing solicitude and care, yet one thing thou lackest. Jesus Christ and Paul are therefore at one in insisting upon some vital element, one predominating and all-ruling presence in the life.

Let us resume our criticism at " beareth all things, endureth all things" (ver. 7). Is that not the same thing ? When we bear do we not endure ? when we endure do we not bear ? No : in English it may be the same thing, but the English loses the finer meaning of the writer. To endure all things is simple enough as to its etymology and practical meaning—patiently to

receive, suffer, and abide through processes that are very trying to body, mind, spirit, temper, and everything that constitutes sensitive manhood. But "beareth all things" is another word altogether. There is no one equivalent word in the English tongue. Literally, it would be, we are told, best represented by some such form as this: "outroofeth all things." What does the roof do? it prevents the storm from getting at the persons who are inside the building. That is the meaning of "beareth all things": it is the roof that catches the storm, and keeps the inmates dry and warm. Man should be to man a protecting roof: that is pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father,—not your metaphysical refining and creed-elaborating and orthodox snivelling debate amongst one another; not your resolution-mongering and your creed-breeding, but loving one another so as to catch the storm yourself and keep it from some other life. That is the miracle of the Cross. It may also be represented by the figure of assuming some impervious garment so that the tempest shall not break through and do injury to the quivering and chilled flesh. There is the mariner on board his ship, blithe and gay and hearty, singing his fresh-air song all the time, or whistling to himself in unexpressed and unrivalled merriment. See how the cloud gathers in the sky, hear how the wind changes its tone, feel how some great drops are already falling upon the clean deck: what does the mariner do? He assumes his great impervious tarpaulin garment, and then he is safe from the raining heavens; the clouds fall upon him, and the streams roll off him, and he is able to do his work with comparative comfort. Charity is that protecting garment. Have we the robe of life in our wardrobe? have we this garment of protection? It would protect ourselves, and it would protect others: here is the double function, the double service, of royal love. When we hear anything against a brother, what should we do? Put on the tarpaulin as the mariner does, and let it all run off. Instead of that, what are we prone to do? To invite the storm, to say to the descending streams, We have been waiting for you; come, here we are in a truly receptive mood. Can there be piety where there is such a spirit? No! But the man who throws off his coat and takes in all the storm knows the Larger and Shorter Catechism! I do not care what he knows

—he is the devil. Why is he so? Because he loves to hear malicious reports, slanderous statements, he loves to hear something against a brother man. Though therefore he have the Larger and the Shorter Catechism, and the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Nine-and-thirty Articles, all at his finger-ends, he is an offence in the sanctuary of Christ.

This chapter would considerably deplete every Church roll, would it not? It would burn it; there would be no Church roll if this chapter were the foundation of the Church. There are those curiously constituted persons who say when they hear the kind of report we refer to, "You know, we could not help hearing these things." I say, No, but you could help repeating them. That is where your responsibility comes in. If you are base enough to make yourself the common sewer of the Church, if men know that they may run the rubbish of society through the conduit of your ignorance, they will avail themselves of that miserable opportunity. There are some men to whom we could not go with a slanderous report—they would burn us! There are others to whom we could go and sit all day, and stuff their vulgar ears with calumnies about their brethren. This is the distinction between "beareth all things" and "endureth all things": in the one case charity out-roofeth all storm and tempest and cold, and in the other charity receives all stings and blows and insults with uncomplaining resignation.

"Thinketh no evil." Here we want a little change in the expression to realise the true meaning of the apostolic thought. "Thinketh no evil" should read, Does not dwell upon evil: does not brood upon it: does not roll it under the tongue as a sweet morsel: does not give it large hospitality in the mind or heart, as who should say, Come in, tell us all your tale, let us talk the whole matter over, and when you have told me the facts of the case, I will ruminate, I will brood, I will put two and two together, and out of the shadows you leave behind I will build a prison for those I hate. "Charity thinketh no evil." If an evil suggestion be made to it charity instantly leaves the subject, declining to brood upon it, and to bring out of bad eggs a bad progeny.

The Apostle cannot content himself with positively describing love. He is in one of his finest moods in this chapter; he will not be poet only, he will be iconoclast: and when Paul does smite the images they are so shattered that they never can be put again upon their pedestals. Paul will not allow tongue or prophecy, or even faith or almsgiving, to have any place in this temple, it can hold but one angel form, and its sweet eternal name is Love. How does Paul value prophecies, tongues, and knowledge? He values them at nothing. If it be a question of comparative values, love takes in all the work and leaves no item of value to anything else. What is "knowledge"? often it is destruction. Are there not many men of large knowledge? Undoubtedly that is so, but if the knowledge has not ripened into wisdom, it is but so much ornament or so much encumbrance. You do not know a language when you know its vocabulary. If you were a dictionary of the German language you might not know how to read German. It is curious that a man should know every word he reads, and yet know nothing about the tongue in which he reads—nothing about it as to its music, its inner meaning, its refined delicacy of expression; the man shall be but a living lexicon. So with this higher tongue of the Christian life. We may know doctrinal forms and doctrinal expressions, and we may be even cleverer, as many doctors of the Church have been, in prostituting single texts into vicious meanings, yet we may know nothing of the spiritual genius and holy intent of Christ's law and Christ's kingdom.

Paul continues to say, "We know in part." Who says so? *Paul!* Paul the Apostle? Yes. He saw a little of the meaning, and it transfigured him into beauty and strength, but he was the first to insist that what he saw was so small as to fill him with impatience to see and know more. Paul had no little book that held in it everything. Paul never numbered his articles of faith. Think of a man keeping a theological store, with separate pigeon-holes and cunningly-shaped drawers for—Predestination—Election—Prevenient Grace—Supralapsarian—Heresies of the Fourth Century—and being able at a moment's notice to take them out and supply them! Paul could not be shaped into that hideousness; Paul lived, he was tempestuous,

sometimes furious, sometimes quiet as a sleeping child : but pre-eminently Paul lived, and lived in love.

“ We prophesy,” the Apostle continues, “ in part.” Who said so ? *Paul!* The same Paul ? Yes ; the same heroic Apostle preached, or prophesied, only “ in part.” I love to hear a man who knows only “ in part ” and says so, who preaches only “ in part,” and gives me to feel that as soon as he gets to know anything more he will tell me. I have confidence in that man ; he will allow me to become his little comrade ; the moment he sees another streak of light on the horizon he will call me up and exclaim, There it is : see how it grows, broadens, brightens ; there is an eternal summer in that one white gleam. Life would be intolerable if we did anything else than know in part and preach in part. It is the coming light that draws us forward by its magic constraint ; it is always that which is “ perfect ” that draws us onward. It may come at any moment ; the Lord will suddenly come to his temple. The Lord has not given us notice as to how he will come or when. There are prophecy-mongers, who ought to be hooted out of society, who have fixed the date of the Lord’s coming. Such men ought to be scourged out of the temple : let them set up their stalls on Salisbury Plain and offer their folly to the winds for sale, but let them not intrude upon the temple of God. When the Lord will come no man knoweth, not even the Son that is in the bosom of the Father ; and when his revelations will come in broadening and brightening heavens, we cannot tell : what I say unto one, I say unto all, Watch : and when you see any new star, call us up, if it be at midnight, lest we miss this access of glory. Paul would thus by the very partialness of his knowledge and preaching make us fellow-students with him ; he would be so great a man as to say, Well, you know something I do not know. We have had a small example of that kind amongst ourselves. Where was there ever a grander, finer, tenderer soul than Edward Irving ? Any man could come and detain him for hours if he said he had a revelation from the Lord. That most eloquent of tongues would lie silent, and that most capacious of minds would open itself with grateful and eager expectancy, because a man had come with a supposed message



from the Lord. That is humility, that is apostolic modesty, that is waiting until the Lord come.

Was Paul ever like one of ourselves? Does he overshadow us by his greatness? Does he repel us by the very majesty which he would disown? On the contrary, he was a man of like passions with ourselves, and he passed through a similar experience to our own:—"When I was a child"—Paul a child?—"I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child"—"Except ye become as little children, ye cannot see the kingdom of God." There are two childhoods: the natural, and the spiritual; we have passed through the one, have we attained the other? Observe, at a certain point in life it is almost a miracle to know the alphabet; but we have forgotten that circumstance. Our attention has been called to the fact that some little person actually knows his letters, and if we did not marvel sufficiently we went down in the maternal imagination and judgment: but if we threw up our hands and said, Impossible! then we were thought to be estimable persons. There is a time when in the case of that very child it would be a shame to him if he knew only his letters. How the miracle changes! When he was in years but a child it was wonderful that he could relate his alphabet without one stumble, but now that ten years have elapsed, and he can only perform the same feat, the very mother that praised him cries, "Shame on you not to be able to do more!" Why should we live upon our alphabetic attainments? Yet this is precisely what men do in the Church. You meet them in the very first days of their Christian experience, and they recite the A B C of the Testament to you, and you are pleased, and you congratulate them, and thank God for their attainments: you meet them in ten years, and they are still talking the same alphabetic speech. Where is progress, where is growth, where is development, where the music that falls harmonically into the fitness of things? Paul says, "when I became a man." Paul would have us forget the things that are behind; the Apostle would not have us learn again our first principles and our elements, and be talking ever more about our alphabetic acquirements; he would advance, proceed, make way in the world; this is the law of evolution. The whole thing we



have to grow up to is love. It is possible to have love without having intellectual faith or hope. Intellectual Christians are useless Christians—that is to say, if they are only intellectual. It is a sad thing for a man to be an intellectual hearer of the Gospel. He will never hear it. The most intellectual man who is in the right spiritual mood will put off his intellect when he enters the church, saying, The place whereon I stand is holy ground; in this sacred enclosure I must be a little child, a worshipper, a man of a contrite and a broken heart; all my literary apparatus I must leave outside, whilst I go to tell God that I have erred and strayed from his way like a lost sheep, and whilst I stand with bent eyes, and say inaudibly to every ear but God's, God be merciful to me a sinner! There is no great intellectual conquest to be made in this drawing near to God. The Church is not an academy, the Church of the living God is not made up of philosophers, and clever persons, and men of highly-trained minds: the question is whether they can be allowed to come in at all or not. The Church is made up of the contrite, the humble, those who do not make their humility a reason against progress; but those who make their humility a stimulus in the direction of all the higher attainments.

How stands the Church to-day in these matters? On the authority of the Apostle Paul, we proclaim love to be the one thing needful. Not love with an easy definition. There is nothing so difficult to define, as we have often seen, as such little words as love, life, peace, truth. This is Paul's dictionary, occupying thirteen verses, or a whole chapter, to itself. Is it possible that we can begin at one of these points without taking in the whole of them? It would be encouraging to some of us if that could be made out to be so. "Charity suffereth long, and is kind": can I enter there? "Charity envieth not": can I take hold at that point? "Charity vaunteth not itself": can I find an inch of standing ground there? "Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth, outrooeth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things,"—oh, is there no little door by which I can enter in somewhere? The rest might come, —the rest, the rest might come!

## PRAYER.

FATHER of our spirits, do thou come to us in Jesus Christ thy Son, then we can bear thy glory. No man can see the light in which thou livest and yet himself live; but the humblest, most broken-hearted, can look upon Jesus Christ, and become immortal. We would always see thy Son; we would begin the day with him; at noontide we would be found close beside him; at twilight we would be within hearing of his voice; all night we would sleep in his arms. Help us to love him, more and more, as day is added to day in our little life; may we, by the power of the Holy Ghost, see him more clearly, receive him more fully, obey him more willingly, and live for him without distraction or hesitation. He loved us all; he loved old age and childhood; he had a word of kindness for those to whom none but himself ever spoke; he left others behind when they were tired, that he might go forward and save the lost. Jesus goes alone; we cannot keep pace with him; he seeks and saves the lost ones. We need this blessed Son of God in our life; without him we are lost, confused, in darkness and trouble; we are bewildered by questions to which there are no answers, and the future is a tremendous cloud: but with Jesus Christ we can do all things, yea, we glory exceedingly in tribulation also; the deeper and blacker the water, the surer his grasp of our life: we bless thee that we know him in the wilderness, in the river, in the furnace, in the difficult place, more perfectly than we can know him in morning sunshine, or in summer calm. Jesus Christ knew all hearts, understood all necessities, touched all pain so as to heal it, and by his very benignity and complacency looked men into newness of strength and hope. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; his the name that is above every name, and his the all-absorbing, all-eclipsing glory: the praise be his for our salvation, for our hope, for a broader, better life, for every expectation that scorns the limitation and the judgment of time. The Lord send into our hearts great gladness; the Lord enable us to glory beyond the Cross, and according to the necessity of the Cross, as the gateway opening upon the glory. At the Cross we say our prayers, we sing our song, and end our cry with the heart's amen. Amen.

## 1 Corinthians xiv. 8.

“For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?”

## TRUMPET AND SWORD.

WITH the trumpet we associate the idea of music, and with music we associate the idea of enjoyment, pleasure, in some sense the idea of intellectual or æsthetic luxury. None

of these ideas can be found in the text. To the Apostle Paul the trumpet was not a musical instrument, it was a battle force. He would utilise everything for Christ. He was not ignorant of secondary uses, of intermediate phases, but he would have everything pressed into the service of the Gospel, and in that service find the culmination and the glory of its purpose. He knew that money was for buying and selling with, intermediately and transiently; but the great object of it was higher. He knew that the world was to be used; but not over-used, said he; make a scaffolding of it by the use of which you may build some better world. When we think of "trumpet" we think of toys, of musical instruments, of pleasure, of gaiety, of dance, and revel. When the Apostle Paul thought of a trumpet he thought of a battle-call, and when he thought of battles he thought not of the conflict of man with man—horrible, unpardonable war—he thought of the encounter that was not carnal, but spiritual,—the mighty, tremendous, eternal conflict between right and wrong. Men talk with trumpets. They talk with musical instruments of meaner kinds. The boatswain in the storm is talking through his whistle. The layman wonders why he whistles so much with that tin whistle, of which he seems to be inordinately proud, as if he were a child with the last toy. The boatswain is not whistling, he is talking: its many sounds equal such and such action,—Aloft! The shrillness means one thing, the gurgle means another, the rapid succession of sound has to do with the navigation of the vessel. To the child the whistle is a toy, to the boatswain it is an instrument of communication where the human voice could not be heard. Everything therefore depends upon the uses to which instruments and faculties and opportunities are turned. Men command with the trumpet. Not a word is spoken, but this rending blare means—Forward! or Backward! As you were! Attention! now Fire! To us they are but so many explosions upon a musical instrument; to the soldier who is away yonder on the hill or in the valley they are orders, commands; and by these blasts shall the army be moved.

Men inspire by the trumpet. Music will do what mere exhortation can never attempt. Preachers ought not to be afraid

of trumpets. The danger is that they should be outdone by the blast of the brazen throat. They ought not to heed such tempting voices as would say unto them, The trumpet will do more than you can do with your tongue. Never! There is no trumpet equal to the human voice; it is of God's fashioning, it is the manifold instrument, it is all instruments shadowed and glorified by one action. The Church therefore ought not to expel the trumpet, the organ, and the cornet, or any musical instrument. It might perhaps do without the flute—because the flute is a kind of lulling instrument, a sort of debased fife—where battle is concerned. We therefore ought to have in the church the trumpet, the far-sounding, ever-repeating, glorious trumpet. Do not say that we are moved by argument only. Men have been moved by music under given circumstances as they have never been moved by mere logic. Man is more than rational. Man is spiritual. Man does not know all his kin. He writes a paper pedigree, but that is not the man. No paper can hold the record in which a man should be able to trace, if not in letters, in sentiments his illustrious ancestry. So the trumpet speaks to man, as well as the human voice. He is amenable to calls that have no words. Men who have been afraid, who have been conscious of exhaustion, have been recreated by the blast of the battle-trumpet, and have gone on to victory from the very point where they expected to die. Touch life at every point; invite all kinds of ministries to operate upon you,—the stars, and the clouds, and the great sea waves and billows, and the birds, and the trees, and the flowers, and the children, and all musical things; and do not hermitise yourselves, but throw off the roof of your hermitage, and let God make your dwelling-place large as is his own sanctuary. You have a right to all these educational inspirations and forces; take your inheritance and be rich.

In a battle the trumpet is as important as the sword. Who ever would have thought of that?—a battle dependent on a trumpet! Yet so it may be. The blower has a good deal to do with the organ. He is not always seen, but if he were to take a little rest in the middle of a tune, it might be awkward. The trumpet says, I am going to battle to-day! and the sword angrily says, I know the pride and the haughtiness of thine heart: to

battle indeed! nay, nay; this is battle, this burnished steel. So God's little scholars talk to one another, and reproach one another, and underrate one another, and call it criticism. It is such criticism that the devil likes. He lives on that criticism; he says, If I can get the sword to reproach the trumpet, and the trumpet to set itself up as of equal value with the sword, I shall fight that army in the rear; there shall not be a stroke on any man's breast, but every man's shoulders shall be punctured, and the army shall be, not only routed, but humiliated. Take care, trumpet and sword, lest by some unmannerly mutual misunderstanding the devil get an advantage: both of you go out to the fight, and see to it that ye fight together!

The Apostle has a curious mind, sometimes almost fantastical in its working, yet always returning to the main line with immense accession of strength. Parentheses weaken some styles. It is said that the heart rests at the point of oscillation. Poor little heart!—throb, throb, throb always: hast thou no night, no sleeping-time? Is it one perpetual flutter? Physiology says that the heart snatches a moment's rest in the action of its throbbing: so this Apostle would seem to rest in his parentheses. Sometimes he takes quite a long holiday, as in chapter xiv., but he will come out of the brackets mighty, definite, and gracious.

In this chapter Paul insists upon intelligence being the standard of edification. The Corinthians were fond of "tongues." At one time Greece was only tongue, or speech, called eloquence. Athens was the Greece of Greece, and would not allow any barbarian to be heard there: yet proud, classic Athens came to talk a patois that civilisation was ashamed of. Take care! All pride leads in that direction, all stupid vanities come to that ruin. "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." The Corinthians would also have tongues,—various voices, incoherent utterances, sounds that returned upon themselves, ever varying the confusion, but never alleviating or enlightening the intellectual darkness, much less contributing spiritual education. The Apostle was very masterly in his treatment of this confusion. Instead of going into the babel-



house with a rod and striking everybody indiscriminately, he, like a wise schoolmaster, said, What is this all about? Give me some understanding of your purpose and policy and methods; I am interested in tongues. Subtle apostle! masterly diplomatist! skilled manager of men! Instead of resorting to his copious resources in the direction of scorn and banter and laughter, he said, I rather like tongues—"I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all": if it comes to a question of tongues I shall be the first man in this church, but what does it all amount to? "Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?" Paul was a master. Instead of abasing them he puts himself into a striking attitude in relation to the Church itself, saying in effect: Suppose that I were the preacher, and I came into the church, and began to babble and to talk, so that you could not make any distinction between one sound and another, what would you think of me? He became a fool sometimes that he might win fools. He was willing to undergo any suspicion of grotesqueness, provided he could save somebody. The modern preacher ruins his ministry by improper propriety. He does not consider the people, he considers himself; and the people do not consider others, they consider each himself. When the true preacher is speaking in one tone he knows that he has an audience within the audience; when he is speaking in another tone, it may be broader, loftier, grander, he knows that he has his congregation within his congregation; and the whole audience should know that they are in the hands of a man who has understanding of the occasion, and is handling it, not to please A or B, but to save somebody. The Apostle, therefore, is willing to submit himself to the supposition, a humiliating supposition, that even he could come and babble in a church, talking inarticulately or incoherently, speaking a language which was little better than the speech of a barbarian.

Thus the Apostle reasons with these Corinthians: he says:—"Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue" (ver. 19).



There is a lesson on preaching. That verse, I would say to any students, will supply you with nearly all the homiletical instruction you require. The Apostle does not want to be a fluent and copious speaker; he does not measure his sermon by its length, which is often the only dimension a sermon possesses; he would have a cubic discourse, not only having length, but breadth, depth and height—a real measure every way. But the object of it must be edification: “But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints” (vers. 28, 33). The rule therefore is spiritual edification; the basis is that intelligence is needed to the upbuilding of the soul,—not intelligence in the narrow intellectual sense, but in the sense of knowing what is said, really seizing its import, and informing the soul as with the treasure of a distinct and living revelation. Do not mistake muddiness for depth; do not mistake fluency for eloquence. There is a speech that, in the language of Tennyson, “babbles on the pebbles,” like his famous brook, which, thanks be to the brook and to the poet, never professed to be the Ganges.

Then the Apostle insists that the musical instrument itself may be right, the battle instrument itself may be of the very choicest quality, and yet it may be perverted in its use:—“If the trumpet give an uncertain sound—” That is the possibility which faced the Apostle. He is not finding fault with the trumpet; he is not finding fault with the trumpeter; he says, If the trumpet is giving two different messages at one and the same time, how can people prepare themselves for the battle? The trumpeter therefore is not to invent; the trumpeter is not to speculate; the trumpeter is not to amuse himself with his instrument; the trumpeter is to keep the battle in view. Let it be clearly understood that the trumpeter has nothing to do but obey orders. At a signal from the commander he multiplies the commander, gives him ubiquity throughout the army. The preacher has nothing to say. There is no impertinence equal to the impertinence of any man standing up to preach to his fellow men, if he has nothing to say, but something that he himself has invented or speculated or dreamed. We do not want the preacher's indiges-

tions ; we do not want an account of his internal neuralgia ; we do not care to know through what awful dreams and nightmares the unhappy man has been passing ; we want to know what God said, what heaven would have earth to be and to do. I do not wonder at the world having left the pulpit. The pulpit is being left more and more, and will soon be invested with the dignity of solo singing to unheeding emptiness. The sooner the day shall come the better, if it has to be that the world is invited to listen to some man's doubts and momentary feelings ; if the world is to be taken into the confidence of some diarist, who writes down from day to day the impossibilities with which he has been struggling. But a Bible ministry will never be deserted, a Bible-loving Church will be a growing quantity ; the minister that tells, in the language of to-day, what was written by the Lord, as from eternal ages, will be recognised as a man who has come from the inner sanctuary with messages that he simply delivers, and with messages that startle and surprise himself with holy amazement. The Apostle is very careful, therefore, about the use of the trumpet. Trumpet for the soldiers, trumpet in the interests of the battle, trumpet only what the general signifies. When he uplifts a hand, you know what you have to say upon the trumpet ; when he waves a flag, the trumpet is to carry the intelligence to the remotest corners of the belligerent host. Never is the trumpeter to practise his own skill, or to do anything upon the trumpet for his own amusement, or even delight.

The trumpeter has his place in the Church. The trumpeter is the minister of God, the teacher sent by Christ to state the terms of emancipation and sanctification. We must therefore have a warning ministry. We are getting more and more afraid of such an instrumentality. We prefer the lute to the trumpet ; we like to hear the harp rather than the ringing blast that calls men to arms or awakens them in the night time to tell them that there is danger in the wind. Let us pray that our rising ministers may be men who are not afraid to be up all night, watching in the darkness, ready to give the signal on the occasion of an approaching enemy. But if the trumpeter give an uncertain sound, how can any one prepare for battle ? If we are uncertain

that there is an enemy, what can we do? If the trumpeter should muse with himself, saying, Is the enemy a person, or is the enemy an influence? the enemy will say, Go on; keep asking the question,—for he is making his preparations to overturn the Church. But I do not want any little fledgling trumpet to stand up before me and begin to reason, whether there is an enemy, whether there is a devil, or whether by some *prosopopœia*—ah, that devil will ruin you through your Greek—there is a personal enemy, or a sort of cloudy general feeling of *miasma* in the air. If the trumpeter is in that condition of mind, he has no business in the battle; let him go and talk the matter over with some of his most venerable relations, he is not a divinely commissioned trumpeter. Let those men preach who can preach—who have something to preach about. I would rather have some of the grand old preachers that had seen the devil and wrestled with him and thrown an inkhorn at him,—I would rather they should be near me in perilous times, than that I should be found in unhappy association with men who have not yet settled the question whether there is a personal enemy, or whether there is simply a malignant and diffused influence.

If we are not sure about inspiration, what can we say about it? The great mischief of all times has been that people have been taking the Bible to pieces, in order to see what it is composed of, and they have seldom, in many instances at least, put it so together again as to make it more effective than before. Who would take the organ to pieces to see where the music comes from? We must have some conception of the reality of inspiration. We need not be certain about the theory, but we must be certain about the fact. I care less and less for mere theory in any department of theology: but a theory and a fact are two totally different things. I may be sure that the Bible is inspired, because of what it has done in history, and what it has done in my own life; and yet I may be quite unequal to a debate as to the competitive claims of conflicting theories. If men are not sure about the future, what can they say that will touch the highest sentiment and the sublimest energy of mankind? If they are not sure but that they may pass away to nothingness, what word of cheer have they to men, who have been bearing the

burden in the heat of the day, and feeling the limitations of the valley, so as to have had burned into their souls the humiliating fact, that they are mere prisoners of time and space? If our preachers are not sure as to the destiny of the wicked, what effect can they produce upon the temper, the intelligence, and the resolution of the world? Above all things, if we are not certain about the Cross, we are lost.

The sword must not despise the trumpet, the trumpet must not exalt itself above the sword. The trumpeter will be preserved from presumption by remembering his responsibility; the trumpeter should say, This battle depends upon me, therefore I must watch the commander, I must be in close touch with the general, never must I take my eyes from him; a single sign must give me my orders, and I will never utter one sound upon this trumpet, that is not consecrated to the direction of the battle. What men there are amongst us, if they would only speak out! We want trumpets, in the form of ministers, who will tell us our dangers as to doctrine and practice and tendency. We want trumpets, in the form of journalists, who will speak boldly out concerning all the corruptions and mischiefs and evil dispositions and tendencies of municipalities and kingdoms, states and continents. We want men of courage, who will tell us when to go forward, when to retire, when to throw into the contest our fiercest energy, and when to abate our application. Pray ye the Lord that he will send us such men. Let me tell you that they will have no easy task of it. Some will go away, but they will come back again in due time. Never ask any man, churchwarden, or deacon, or seatholder, or any living soul, what you have to preach: read the Book of God on your knees, study it as for eternity, and then, come weal or woe, much bread or little or none, say what the Lord has put into your souls.

## PRAYER.

**OUR FATHER** in heaven, bring us back to thyself, to thy righteousness, to obedience, to the love of holiness, and to good-doing all the day. We know that we have done the things we ought not to have done, but inasmuch as we are still living in thy sight we have hope that on the confession of our sin thou wilt pardon us at the Cross of Jesus Christ, the eternal Saviour, and give us newness of hope. Speak to us even in our sinfulness, lest we fall into despair. Preach thy Gospel unto us in the night-time, then shall we know that thou art still seeking our souls, that they may be saved, and brought home, and set in the household of God. Deliver us not wholly over to ourselves, or we shall certainly go farther from thee day by day. It is not in us to return; we cannot climb the upward way, it is steep and high and difficult; thou canst save, and thou alone. Come to us in the almightiness of thy grace, in the tenderness of thy love, in the compassion of thy Cross, in all the efficacy of the ransoming blood, and bring us home again. We have wandered far, we are weary of the world; it is not in time to satisfy the instincts of immortality; the rivers of the world cannot quench the thirst of the soul: but the river of God is full of water; thou canst satisfy the longing soul, and it is in the power of thy grace to heal all our backsliding, and our wounds, and to recover us from our sore apostasy. We cast ourselves therefore upon thee; our expectation is from on high; we shall not be delivered over to the power of the lion or trampled under foot, for we are bought with blood, we are ransomed with a great price, and because of the Cross of Christ we need not, shall not, die. By the ministry of providence help us to believe that thou dost mean our ultimate and perfect deliverance. Thou dost heal us, by the breathing wind, by the sunlight, by all the ministry of nature; it is unto us as mother and nurse, physician and friend, and the meaning of it is our personal and eternal salvation. Help us to see the goodness of God, that we may see his glory; may the goodness of God lead us not to boasting and exultation and presumption, but to repentance; may we look at providence through our tears, and find in providence the beginning of redemption. Wherein thou hast called us back and given us an estate in thy household, continue to educate us, to edify our souls, in wisdom, in righteousness, in love of nobleness and honour, and grant unto us daily strength for daily need, that we may never be worsted in the fight of life, but may always be victorious through the power that is in Christ Jesus. We bless thee that being in the household of God we are entrusted with all the armour of righteousness, on the right hand and on the left, so that we do not fight in our own strength, or according to our own sagacity; we are shielded by God, we are protected



by omnipotence, we are inspired by the Holy Ghost; enable us therefore to see that the fight is not ours but God's, and that thou art perfecting and completing thine own oath in the perfect deliverance and ultimate sanctification of thy people. Give us understanding of thy book—a deep, clear, full understanding, so that we may enjoy rest in the Lord, being no longer tossed about by every wind of doctrine; may we be established, steadfast, firm, enduring unto the end, as men who are like trees planted by the rivers of water. Grant unto us according to life's necessity the ministry of direction and consolation: in perplexity show us the right way, in sorrow dry our tears, in bereavement preach to us the doctrine and the person of the resurrection; and amid all the darkness show us that the light is greater than the night, and that the summer shall be eternal when the winter has done its work and is for ever forgotten. In all the way of life let the eye of the Lord guide us, and at the last may we be able to whisper, if we cannot say aloud, When heart and flesh do fail the Lord will take me up, and as for the valley of the shadow of death it is but a way into the garden of God, and God's rod and staff comfort and support the on-passing soul. Thus by life, and thus in death, may we be able to glorify the Cross of Christ, and show that the faith that is in the Lamb of God is not in vain, but is a gracious, mighty, according power, lifting the soul nearer God, and enriching the soul with all the wealth of heaven. Amen.

### 1 Corinthians xiv. 18-19.

18. I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all:

19. Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.

### INTELLIGIBLE SPEECH.

ONE of the principal lessons—perhaps the one great lesson—which Paul teaches in this remarkable chapter is that all things are to be done “unto edifying,”—a practical and useful purpose is to mark everything that is done in the Church. A thing was not to be done for the mere sake of doing it. If a man had anything to say, he was first to consider whether there was an interpreter present; if not, he was to keep silence in the church, or to speak to himself and to God; interpretation was of more consequence than mere sound: anybody can make a noise in the church, but noise is not edifying—it is not of the nature of true worship—“For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.” Paul thus imposes the law of self-control upon ecstatic persons: they want to speak, they can hardly repress their desire to make themselves heard, yet Paul brings them under the discipline which requires that



they shall first look round to see if an interpreter be present, because everything depends upon interpretation—namely, intelligence, right apprehension of the meaning, and a true response to any appeal that may be delivered. In all cases the interpreter is of greater consequence than the speaker. Paul told the Corinthians that it was better, more useful, to prophesy than to speak unknown tongues, because “He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.” To prophesy literally means to teach, to communicate knowledge to another, to explain difficulties, and to bring the mind up to a right level of information; and teaching is the very first condition of the building up of mind and character. Mere sound cannot edify; it may excite and stimulate, it may please the ear, but even pipe and harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? The blast of a trumpet may be very startling, but, if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? Only, therefore, as there is meaning in sound, is sound to be permitted at all in the church; however grand any expression may be in the opinion of the speaker, it is not to be forced upon the Church, unless there be an interpreter to make it plain,—“Except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? For ye shall speak into the air.” Observe the expression “Words easy to be understood”: Earnestness will always endeavour to find out such words and to utter them in a heartfelt tone: we are not to seek after difficult expressions, or to make mysteries where we ought to give explanations; our whole business as churches, ministers, and teachers is to exemplify things,—that is, to make them as easy as we possibly can, so that as many may be brought within the might and comfort of the Gospel as can understand our message.

Throughout the chapter there is one great principle asserted, the principle that all things are to be done unto edifying,—look at the various expressions in proof: “He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification . . . he that prophesieth edifieth the church . . . that the church may receive edifying. . . . Seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church,” and again, “Let all things be done unto edifying.” The personal is to be

sacrificed for the benefit of the general ; thanks are to be so given, that he who occupies the room of the unlearned shall also be able intelligently to say, Amen ; and prophesying is to be so conducted, that the unlearned man or the unbeliever should be convinced of all, and should be constrained to say, " God is in you of a truth." The Apostle thus shows his own earnestness as well as exhorts other men to sincerity. He will never use a hard word where he can use an easy one. He disdains excellency of speech according to the wisdom of this world, and sacrifices everything to the directness and audibleness of his message. It would seem that in this argument Paul teaches that Christian edification is the best test of Christian service and worship. It is perhaps hardly necessary to say that there is a kind of utilitarianism which need not be included in the term edification. In fact the word " simple," as we have often had occasion to see, is much misunderstood, and, indeed, is always misunderstood when it is supposed to be equal to obviousness, shallowness, and mere surface. The universe is not made of straight lines. Everything that we see in nature and in our own structure turns as soon as possible in a certain clear direction : pillars become arches ; out of the great rains are made the bows which are the sign of Divine covenants ; the lily and the bird teach how good and patient is the care of God—

"To me, the meanest flower that blows can give  
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

Some men can truly say,—

"The sounding cataract  
Haunted me like a passion ; the tall rock,  
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,  
Their colours and their forms, were then to me  
An appetite, a feeling, and a love."

So that edification may come through the contemplative, the ideal, and the poetic sides of Nature. Lorenzo well said,—

"Look how the floor of heaven  
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold ;  
There's not the smallest orb which thou beholdest  
But in his motion like an angel sings,  
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubim."

We are not afraid to endorse the doctrine that—

“The man that hath no music in himself,  
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,  
Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils;  
The motions of his spirit are dull as night,  
And his affections dark as Erebus.”

It is worth while to point this out lest some should get the notion that Church life means only what is dull and cold and insipid; and especially lest any should be brought under the delusion that by edification is meant self-edification alone, as if every man's attention were to be fixed upon his own personality and attainments and progress; whereas we really build ourselves up in proportion as we attempt to build up other people. Christianity is the sum of all graces, the climax of beauty, the most magnificent expression of all that is great and grand in human nature as redeemed and renewed by God. Yet Christianity calls every human power to its highest uses; it never encourages mere sentiment, or allows itself to be made the convenience of mere genius. Like its author, it is the agent of a redeeming work, and redemption implies earnestness intense as fire, and self-devotion faithful even unto death. Christianity might well challenge all rivals,—Are ye lovers of beauty? so am I. Are ye responsive to music? so am I. Do you rejoice in all the varieties of eloquence, and all the resources of art? I more; I give eloquence its highest theme, and the artist borrows his most graceful lines from me,—“I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all: yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.”

The doctrine of the Apostle enables us to look at the Church as a whole, and on all its appointments, methods, and resources, with a view of inquiring how far they minister to edification. Take, for example, the whole question of symbolism. Does it minister to the building up of character? Are men made the better and stronger for it? It is not hard to conceive that ritualism may be to some minds a religious help. So much ignorance has been displayed upon this point, simply because

some men have supposed that, as ritualism is of no use to themselves, it cannot possibly be of use to any other Christians. We must get rid altogether of this injustice of measuring other people by ourselves. There are minds that are very strongly ideal, and that through beautiful forms can see Beauty herself; to such minds a picture may be a means of grace; the heart may be stimulated through the eye,—then, again, there are minds wanting in concentration; they cannot follow a course of thought, either devotional or expository; they, like little children, must have symbols, pictures, and diagrams; the claim of ritualism, then, must be determined by its relation to the practical work of the Christian sanctuary: does it help any one to serve God? does it teach spiritual truth? does it minister to edification? Of course there will be persons who will arise to condemn all symbolism, simply because they neither understand it, nor require its assistance. But such people are playing merely the part of critics; they are not invested with prophetic genius; they are not animated by the great shepherdly spirit which includes the wants of the whole flock of God. It ought to be enough that a man of simplicity and earnestness of spirit says that he himself is edified by this or that form of worship. At the same time he would be unjust to others if he insisted that only through symbolism can true worship be offered. On all such matters every man must be fully persuaded in his own mind, and each must take care not to limit the liberty of his brother. It is not to the point, let me say again, that some minds do not require assistance of an external kind. It is difficult to find out what some minds do require: they never consider the heavens, the work of God's fingers, the moon and the stars, which he has ordained; they never lift up their eyes on high and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number; they never reflect that the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; they could do without birds, without flowers, without little children, without everything but straight lines, daily food, and nightly sleep;—they know nothing about the paradoxes of earnest life—they think it is a contradiction in terms to “endure as seeing the invisible”; they cannot read the imagery of Ezekiel, they see no meaning in the visions

which arrested the attention of Daniel,—the lion with eagle's wings, with a man's feet and a man's heart; the bear with three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it; the leopard with four wings of a fowl upon its back; the beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly, with great iron teeth and ten horns; and the Apocalypse frightens their unimaginative souls. It would be hardly fair to quote the opinions of such people against symbolism; the appeal, therefore, must be more general. Taking the Church as a whole, does symbolism minister to edification? I am not speaking at this moment of symbolism in any of its special exhibitions; my remarks have no reference to particular instances, but entirely to symbolism in the abstract, or as an assistant to spiritual worship, and the cultivation of the profoundest devout life. For my part, I hesitate not to teach that worship cannot be too simple; but here again the word "simple" needs not be defined with extreme care and jealousy. "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." I should like to do away with every tune which the plainest man could not learn to sing; I should do away with many objects of colour and with many garments and adornments and embroidered table-cloths; yet I would in all such matters subordinate my personal judgment to the judgment of the majority, and having found out what must tend to instruct and comfort and edify the Church, I should zealously and thankfully uphold it for the sake of others. If those who require symbolism are a minority and will not submit to the general judgment let them worship by themselves; they have no right to make themselves an offence to their brethren; and, on the other hand, if they represent the general judgment and conscience of any Christian community, then let those who dissent from their view give them liberty to carry out whatever they believe to be essential to spiritual edification. Let there be no battle of words, no angry controversy about such matters, nor should clamour enter in, when the common object of those who conduct the controversy is personal and general edification.

We may usefully apply the principle to the matter of public preaching,—“I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten



thousand words in an unknown tongue." Paul insists that, in preaching, everything is to be done unto edifying. There is to be no talking for talking's sake; no talking against time; no indulgence of the preacher's taste at the expense of the general welfare of his hearers; no enticing words of man's wisdom; no bewildering refinements; everything is to be clear, pointed, practical,—the result of a holy and unchangeable determination to preach Jesus Christ and him crucified. Better say five simple words than ten thousand words which men cannot understand. Yet there are many mistakes made about what is called simple preaching. Simple preaching is not barren preaching. Simple preaching is not a mechanical repetition of commonplaces. Jesus Christ's preaching was simple, yet how it glitters—how full of beauty—how rich in pathos! "Never man spake like this man." How he taxed the thought and smote the heart of his hearers,—how greatly were the people astonished at his doctrine! The wise preacher brings things new and old out of his treasury, and adapts himself to the current experience and necessities of his hearers. Luther, speaking of his own preaching, says,—“I took no notice of the doctors, of whom there were about forty, but I preached to the housemaids and the young men, of whom there were about two thousand.” That was the secret of the great Reformer's power—he knew that he must speak to the common heart of humanity, and not to a merely cultivated taste, or a classified species of genius. Speak to all, if you would speak to some; speak the universal language, if you would be understood by the universal heart. What temptations there are to preachers to operate in another direction! How tempted they are to study for the cultured, providing food for the dainty-minded, the critical, and the fastidious! How subtle is the temptation which leads the preacher away from the consideration of common wants to the discussion of uncommon topics, that he may show himself to be abreast of the times, and that he may exchange words upon an equal footing with men who are supposed to lead the intelligence of the age! When a preacher gives way to this temptation, he forgets that everything is to be done to edifying. Take any average congregation, and it will be found that it is not composed of learning, genius, great mental capacity, and high literary attainment; it is made up of



ordinary people, and it represents much bewilderment, heart-ache, sorrow, and deep desire for spiritual satisfaction. The true minister of Jesus Christ will pay no attention to those who represent merely passing interests, but will look to those who, in deep earnestness of spirit, hunger and thirst after righteousness. Of Jesus Christ it is said, "The common people heard him gladly": they understood his words as to their tenderest spiritual meaning; often indeed they were overwhelmed by that peculiar something in the Son of God, which separated him from all other men, but again and again they came upon Gospel words and Gospel tones, which penetrated their very heart and succoured their innermost spirit. Hearers have a good deal to do in determining the quality of preaching. An earnest people will demand an earnest ministry. When the people come with itching ears they may tempt the preacher to employ enticing words of man's wisdom; when they are speculative, technical, and fastidious, they must necessarily affect the ministry injuriously; but when they come hungering and thirsting after the truth, when they say to preachers, "Sirs, we would see Jesus," and when they express discontent because Jesus Christ is concealed, they will soon make even the pulpit feel that it must be faithful to essential doctrine, if it is to retain its hold upon the affections of men.

There is a possibility of preaching the Gospel in an unknown tongue. The Gospel is preached in an unknown tongue when its great vital truths are only hinted at, or are treated as mere problems in spiritual science,—discussed with pre-eminent ability, it may be, but without reference to the personal salvation of the hearers. Preachers often preach to themselves in a sense of the term which is to be deprecated: that is to say, they preach to their own learning, their own taste, their own opportunities of reading and knowledge; they do not sufficiently consider that the great body of the people have no such opportunities, and that they need the Gospel presented to them in the simplest and most striking and attractive forms. The Gospel is preached in an unknown tongue when it is preached away from the experience of the congregation. Men who have been in the world all the week, and who have been pressed by the secularising

influences of time ; men who have encountered the most persistent and forcible temptation, need instruction of the most practical kind given to them in the most patient and sympathetic spirit : the unknown tongue is a mockery, not to their minds only, but to their hearts : it is as if in answer to a prayer for bread they should be insulted by an offering of stones. The preacher should by his very manner take it for granted that the people are in earnest, and thus he will show that he expects on the part of the people a preparation at least equal to his own in all spiritual fitness for the reception of the word of God. There will be something about him which will clearly indicate that he is utterly impatient with everything of a merely æsthetic nature, with all mere love of curiosity, and with all the imaginations of uncontrolled fancy ; he will show that he has been enclosed with Christ in the very sanctuary of the Cross, and that he comes from the innermost altar of the universe, in order that he may attempt in the name of Christ, and in the power of truth, to save men. We may adopt this principle in judging of the whole scheme and service of human life. Paul would say, paraphrasing his own doctrine—I had rather do the little real than the great fanciful ; I had rather be understood than merely wondered at and admired. There is a strong temptation to leave the simple and the easy in order to attempt something romantic and wholly exceptional in human service. It is in this direction that so much of our energy is misspent. If we would simply do the things that are at our hands and which are obviously good and useful, we should make the best use of our strength, and edify many by our benevolent labours. If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it ? is a question which may be applied in all directions in human life. Who does not hold himself prepared to make some special effort to be present on some historical occasion, to take part in some stupendous transaction ? But all such opportunities are of necessity rare. We are not called upon to work miracles but to make the best of the commonplaces of life. Love is to be a perpetual miracle, by its patience, its tenderness, the minuteness of its attentions, and its unchangeableness. Better lead a blind man across a thoroughfare, than be waiting for an opportunity of writing one's name on the very loftiest capital ; better make home sweet,

pure, and lustrous, than await some opportunity of commanding the attention of listening senates, and paralysing nations and empires by some word of terror. Do not let us attempt to live the romantic (which is often the idiotic) life, but let us come down to common things, to daily experience, to fraternal and social intercourse, and do everything we can to be rich and earnest and helpful amid all the practical necessities of an ever-needful life. Are not some of us living a life that has no meaning in the Church? People cannot understand what we are doing, and therefore, being unable to understand, they are not edified by our example. Though we never speak an audible word, yet our conduct itself is an unknown tongue. God is ever mindful of those who do the real rather than the showy work of life. He singles out for commendation those who have been faithful over few things; he takes notice of the cup of cold water and the box of ointment; and he declares by one of his Apostles that, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" He does not require great romantic exploits and adventures, things that make the angels wonder; he looks for simplicity, kindness, charity, zeal in a benevolent self-sacrifice, and a patient and loving expectation of his own coming. To all such God will show himself in the fulness of his love, and he will make them strong and triumphant by the power of his grace.

## 1 Corinthians xv.

### THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

THERE is no need of any other creed than that which is to be found within the four corners of this chapter. It would be easy to show that all Christian history, all Christian thought, all Christian doctrine, may be found in these fifty-eight verses. We have the Old Testament; we have the revelation of Christ, and the work of Christ in every aspect; we have the counter-action of the old Adamic failure: we have the rule and kingship of the Son of God; we have the promised resurrection of the dead; and concluding all the radiant and triumphant argument we have the sublime application—work! We never can do enough of it. Do not lose yourselves in your theological rhapsodies, but show that they are not rhapsodies at all, but rational raptures, by being “stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord”: let your service prove your doctrine. Paul is very personal, nearly always. Some men rightly object to personality, simply because they have no personality of their own. It would be absurd, beyond the point of allowable comedy, for some persons to speak in the first personal pronoun. They are the persons who always object to the use of that pronoun by other people. Were they to base any argument or suggestion on their own personality, it would be like attempting to build a large edifice upon the point of a pin. But Paul had a personality, and he used it, and was neither afraid nor ashamed to use it; he had a great big life, a grand identity: what understanding, what majesty of reason, what depth and reality of emotion! What hero-stuff was he made of! He could not help projecting his personality into his works because his personality was a sanctified reality,—“By the grace of God, I am what I am.” Let the mountain be ashamed of its stature, let the sun be ashamed of its glory, but let no Christian man be ashamed to utter all that Christ has done for him, and to trace all his magnitude to the power and goodness of the Son of

God! Hear Paul's personality:—"I declare"; "I preached"; "I delivered"; "I received"; thus he brings us into close quarters with his character. Theologians now write what they have heard and what they have read, and therefore all their testimony is open to suspicion, and is generally pointless: but there have been men in the Church who spoke in their own person, men who stood up and made oath and said, each in his own name,—I received, I saw, I heard. When the testimony is of that kind, before we can destroy the testimony we must destroy the character of the witness. That is the easy plan of inexperienced pleaders. The first idea that occurs to the opening mind that means one day to be judicial is to assail the good faith of the witness. Paul stands before the Church, and declares in his own name what he had seen, heard, received, and done by express authority. Let us hear him in detail.

"Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (ver. 3). What Scriptures? There was no New Testament then; consequently we are driven back upon the Old Testament as covering the ground indicated by the word "Scriptures." Men are sometimes prone now to close the Old Testament; they say, We have passed all the ground limited and signified by Old Testament writing. We are bound in reply to consider what use Christ made of the Old Testament, and what use the Apostles made of the ancient Scriptures. Paul does not hesitate to find evangelical doctrine in prophetic writing. Listen to the words again, for they are expressive, "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." It is important to know how Paul read the Scriptures. Paul was not a man we could do very well without in any great Christian service or argument; it never can be a matter of unimportance what such a man as he thought, so penetrating, so just, so ardent, so masterful in all his survey and grasp and reasoning. Paul so read the Old Testament as to find Jesus Christ in it everywhere. Nor did he invent this method of making the Old Testament Messianic, for before Paul arose Jesus himself began at Moses, and in all the Scriptures expounded unto the tear-blinded disciples the things concerning himself; and so exact was his exposition, so definite his citation, and so loving his appeal, that the hearts of the despairing men began to feel the



old glow, and their hearts burned within them under the new reading of the old writing. The Old Testament is saturated with Christ. There is a danger of pushing allusions too far, but there is another danger of not rightly using the allusions which ought to be patent to a true faith and an ardent love. Better find more Christ than less Christ in the Old Testament. "And that he was buried" (ver. 4). The Apostle was not afraid of what we call tautology; he did not say, Inasmuch as he died he must have been buried. He will set it down as a separate fact having its own load of meaning that Christ was buried. He was not a half-dead Christ, a swooning, fainting Christ, seen in a very happy simulation of death: he was buried. "And that he rose again the third day"—How?—"According to the Scriptures." Is the Resurrection then in the Old Testament? Paul would seem to have found it there: Then how many have failed to read the Old Testament aright, because it has been a favourite argument with many that the resurrection of the dead is not hinted at in the Old Testament, or only so dimly indicated as really not to amount to a line of evidence. There may be greater men than Paul: some of us have not met them. It is important that under Paul's own sign-manual we have the declaration that when he read the Scriptures he saw Christ dying in them for our sins, and when he read them again he saw Christ rising out of the grave, a Victor-Saviour loaded with the spoils of the enemy. "And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve." Paul is not literal; he could not find room in the letter to live it, so he says, "The twelve," indicating the number that was the first disciple body. We speak of the ten, whereas there may be only seven, because ten is the real number, the significant symbol, the true arithmetic. One had gone, but "the twelve" became the more pathetic because of that tragical vacancy. "After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present," who can be consulted, examined, tested. "After that, he was seen of James; then of all the Apostles." This evidence in any secular case would be pronounced overwhelming. Were this evidence cited in support of the authorship of any classic work, men might be stopped in the citation long before they concluded it, because the assenting auditors would say, It is enough: the point is more than proved.



But, to some minds, the greatest, clearest evidence has yet to come, namely in the eighth verse—"And last of all he was seen of me also." Sometimes the very least part of the building is at the tip-top of it. The huge edifice needed just that little fingertip to complete it; the littleness is more than balanced by the elevation. "Last of all"—that is to say, last of all Paul's line of argument, or series of examinations and credentials—"he was seen of me also." But is there not a sense in which every Christian sees his risen Lord? There may be need to adjure us not to press this point too literally, and we respond, To apply it literally would be to lose its meaning: yet we do claim that there is a sense in which every preacher, every believer, every true reader of the Scriptures must have seen Christ for himself as with his own eyes; so that when all the great historical witnesses have passed in proud procession, a voice may be lifted up, saying, I wish to add my testimony, for I too have seen the Lord. There is no doubt, then, about the historical basis on which Paul built his system of truth. There is not a reference here to fancy; the Apostle owes nothing to transcendentalism or idealism or magical power of supposed things: he lays a foundation of granite, he stands upon it, and challenges the world to dispute its solidity. So there was one man who believed all the story—the dying, the burying, the rising again, the revelation to one, and twelve, and five hundred, and another, the whole Apostolate, and last of all to the greatest, Paul. It is important to notice that Paul describes Jesus Christ's death in terms which elevate it above the suspicion of being a mere martyrdom. We do not read that Christ was taken by wicked hands and slain, which would have been narrowly and temporarily true: we read that Christ "died." There is a quietness about this word "died" which we do not find in the word crucified, slain, murdered. We might have seen him die in a chamber, quieted by the presence of the last visitant; this might have occurred in solitude. There is a solemn pathos in this word "died"; it indicates voluntariness, consent, something done of set purpose, an accomplished idea, a self-surrender, a lying down that something might be done in that posture which would end in victory and redemption.

The Apostle Paul is not content with dwelling upon the

resurrection of Christ : he will have all men raised in Christ. It was the peculiar genius of the Apostle to amplify. When you showed him an acorn you showed him a Bashan : Give Paul one little bulb, and instantly you touched the fountains of his eloquence, and he described gardens and paradises and heavens of beauty ; he saw the whole in the part, he saw the paradise in the seed. So Paul will have it that Christ's resurrection carries every other resurrection : If Christ rose from the dead, there can be no graveyard beyond a given point. "Now," he begins in the twelfth verse, and then takes his course through an argument close as mailed armour. One of his points is very pathetic. He turns from abstract reasoning to a personal application of a very tender kind. "Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God ; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ : whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not." He feels that he has been stung by an insult ; somebody has not believed him ; he says in effect. Besides all this, you make us liars, because our Christianity is based, not only upon historical evidence, but upon personal sympathy and experience, and if you insist upon it that the dead rise not, you make us liars, false witnesses of God. How like a true man he spoke ! To be accounted a false witness burned him like fire. In very deed Paul did much to show that he could not have been a false witness. No man would have suffered for a lie as he suffered when he knew that it was a lie, and could by one opening of his mouth have saved himself from a thousand difficulties. Having become possessed of the idea that Christ rose from the dead, Paul never left the ground. Though he was told that bonds and imprisonment awaited him in the next city, he said, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy." And when all was over he laid down his venerable head, and said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course." See how a liar dies ; see how a false witness passes into eternity ! Is it possible after reading the life of Paul that we can disbelieve the sincerity of the man ? Yet this very man says : I saw Christ ; I talked with Christ ; I received a direct commission from Christ ; I have not told you one word of my own mind or my own fancy ; all you have heard from me I have heard from him ; I but

repeat the thunder, I but echo the music. Let us suppose that he was a mistaken man; he did enough under the inspiration of his mistake to make us wish that we also were mistaken. What heroisms came out of the hallucination! what defence of the right, what noble courage, what moral chivalry! Better be mistaken in that direction than to be so convinced in another direction as to live unto oneself, and have no care who lives or dies, provided we have our own food and raiment. With Paul it was not enough that Christ lived and died and was buried; in all that, Paul would have found no Gospel; if the story had ended there, it would have had no interest for a mind like Paul's; he would justly have said, All this may have justly taken place, but it all ended in a melancholy failure. Paul would not have Christianity until it was crowned with the resurrection of its founder. Paul had nothing to do with the martyrs except as they had to do with Christ. Martyrdom was not redemption, murder was not propitiation; he must see the priest in the victim, the victim in the priest, the priest and the victim in the risen king. He thought he saw it all; he lived under the inspiration of that vision; and let any other man put his life against the heroic course of Paul, and take what credit he can from the contrast. We speak much of the death of Christ, and in so doing our pathos is well bestowed, but we do not perhaps speak enough of the resurrection of Christ. Jesus Christ used his own resurrection in this way—namely, that he told his disciples to take it back over all the things they had seen and heard, and it would cast a light upon all the series of instruction and events. "Tell it not until the Son of Man be risen from the dead." We are now entitled to take the whole life of Christ over the whole ground of the Old Testament Scriptures, and to see every grand mystery lighted up with this great glory; and in coming to the New Testament we can make nothing of it, in all its profounder meanings and holier applications, until we take back upon Bethlehem the resurrection of the Child that was born there. Doubling back upon history, with all the assistance of the resurrection, every miracle has a new meaning, every word a larger significance, every outlook a wider horizon. It is the peculiarity of the Scriptures that you cannot understand the part until you understand the whole. First read the Scriptures from

the beginning to the end, then take the end back upon the beginning. There are those who say, Let us read the Bible just as we come to it, a verse at a time. That is a literal way of reading it; it is not an inadmissible way of perusing the sacred page: but Christ himself has told us there is a more excellent way. Why should we object to adopt Christ's method? namely, to take the end back to the beginning, and read from the beginning, knowing as we do the mystery and glory of the end? He who reads the Scriptures so will never cease to read them: men do not willingly run away from Paradise; men are not impatient to leave the face or the voice that fascinates and gratifies their attention; the hungry child does not willingly leave the food which he appreciates and which is supplied in abundance; so he who knows Christ will carry back into Genesis meanings which a mere scholarly reader can never find there. The Bible is not a piece of literature only, it is a revelation. There is a way of treating literature, and there is a way of treating the revealed will of God. Literature must submit to be torn to pieces by the grammar, by the lexicon; it must subject itself to the torture of literary analysis: but a revelation descends and ascends, changes its motion, alters its colour, varies its aspect, and is not to be treated with the iron instruments with which we torture common letters.

If Christ died and rose again, Paul says, they who sleep in Christ shall also be raised by his power. Paul will have every little child brought back; and Christ has a larger heart than Paul. Paul might suppose there were more little children to come, but Christ knows them by name. This is the Christian vision, this is the Christian inspiration. Paul will see in Christ the work, the failure of the first Adam counteracted. The Lord is not going to leave a desert where he meant to have a garden: with men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." What heart is there that would not dwell upon that word "all" in lingering emphasis, as if it really did mean that, somehow not known to us, even the worst should be brought in? Is there not a hint of this in the experience of the man who says,—I am the least of the Apostles; I am not meet to be called an Apostle;

for I persecuted the Church of God ; and if I could be brought in, my own experience is my best conviction that the worst man need not despair. Paul did not so magnify his Apostleship as to exclude other people ; he so viewed it and estimated it as to include everybody, saying, If I, then all. These are wonderful words, and not to be easily dismissed—"as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." I do not see that we are entitled to alter the grammar in the latter part of the sentence ; we must apply the same rule of interpretation to the whole text. Did all die in Adam ? Let us reply, Yes. Then are all to be made alive in Christ ? Be fearless : and then our answer will be, Having admitted the one, we cannot deny the other. How is it to be brought about ? That we cannot tell, further than that we are always entitled to say, By the grace and wisdom and power of Christ. "But every man in his own order:" literally, Every man in his own troop ; as if the whole were one great army, an infinite series of massed and regulated regiments, each to be called for by the commander in his own time in his own way,—forward ! Then comes his indication of the aged, the young, the martyrs, the ancients, the great ones,—forward ! Every man in his own troop. Hear the tramp ! oh, what a music, resounds from that tramp of feet advancing to the final rest ! Then Christ is to complete in kingship what he began in subjection. He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. It is important to know who is to be king. Read the great psalm in which the king is predicted who is to reign from the river unto the ends of the earth. Who is he ? What is his character ? He is to have dominion from sea to sea. Will he be very grand ? Will he be too dazzling in glory for our poor eyes to look upon ? "He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. . . . He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass : as showers that water the earth . . . shall deliver the needy when he crieth ; the poor also, and him that hath no helper." God save the King ! This is the man we want to reign over us. No matter how ineffable his majesty and glory, no matter how far off the universe may behold the dazzling gleaming of his diadem ; we have it that he shall save the poor and needy. If we cannot look upon his loftiness, we may touch him at his point of condescension,



## 1 Corinthians xv.

### PAUL SPEAKS OF DEATH.

**WE** wonder how the Apostle will speak of death. It is noticeable that he speaks of everything with the dignity and calmness of a strong man. Surely, you say, he will sometimes quail, surely sometimes even his gigantic strength will quiver. Yet we never detect any sign of weakness in the way in which Paul deports himself in the presence of great questions and great agonies. He was himself great : not only was his office great and conspicuous, and his function wholly notable and supreme, the quality of the man was itself of the finest sort. He seemed to handle everything as if it were below him, rather than above him, and requiring strain and effort and strenuous attention.

How will Paul speak of death ? He will speak of death in the power of Christ. He says, Christ is risen, therefore death is destroyed. He risks everything upon Christ. In the Apostle's preaching Christ does not constitute an incidental element, something that may be brought in or may not, according to the current of his own thought or the suggestion of circumstances : Paul never begins his work without intending to begin with Christ, continue with Christ, and end with Christ. If there is no Cross, there is no preaching, there is no faith, there is no Gospel, there is no resurrection, there is no heaven. In Paul's estimation—it may not be so greatly prized as that of many men of the present day—but in his own way of looking at things, Christ was everything, the explanation of everything, and the mystery of everything ; the glory of all hope, the immortality of all true life.

Having assured himself that Christ is not dead, he said, All the rest will come. The resurrection of Christ carries everything with it. But did Christ rise again from the dead ? Paul



says he did. Nor is his witness anonymous. He says that the risen Christ was seen of Cephas, then he was seen of the twelve, after that he was seen of about five hundred brethren at once, after that he was seen of James, and then he was seen of all the Apostles. Of course they might all be mistaken; but here are their names, here is their testimony. They say they saw him, spoke to him, touched him, heard him. The evidence is very striking, and quite cumulative; there is nothing mysterious or anonymous about it; no new witnesses are created for the occasion, but the old followers, the old students, the old comrades and friends. That ought to go for something; that, indeed, ought to go for much; yea, for so much as to decide the question of Christ's identity as the risen One. But this was not enough for Paul. "Last of all he was seen of me also": I have seen the Man; if you deny my witness, you deny my character; if you say I have been mistaken, then you challenge my understanding, my natural sagacity, my senses, my whole manhood in fact: I say, solemnly, distinctly, not as a poet, not as an idealist, not as a mystic, but I say as a reasoner, I saw him. That ought to go for much. Denial amounts to nothing. What is easier than for men to stand up and say that they do not believe Paul? We must inquire who they are, what right they have to speak in such a court; we must ask on what Bible they swear. There may be persons who will arise on some future occasion and deny their testimony. Denial therefore amounts to nothing; it is not argument, at best it is but a subterfuge. With all those witnesses before us we are acting a rational part in believing that the Man who was crucified did rise again. Grant that, said Paul, and you grant the whole action of what is known as the resurrection. Because Christ rose, all who sleep in Christ shall rise with him.

"Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" Even in that early time men wondered and doubted; but men always wonder, and always doubt. The question is, By whom shall we stand? Here is distinction of parties, here is a division of testimony: "Cephas," "the twelve," "five hundred brethren at once," "James," "all the apostles," "and last of all he was

seen of me also." That is the one side : call up the next class of witnesses :—"some among you"—are their names given? Is any weight attached to their testimony? Not a whit. We can take which side we please. On the one side we shall have living men, men whose identity could be established, whose history could be traced, whose character could be estimated ; and on the other side we shall have "some among you," some Corinthians,—and who the Corinthians were when gathered into a Church we can easily find out by reading this very epistle. If ever there was an unruly, unmanageable, riotous set of men in the world, they could be found in the Church at Corinth. Now take sides.

The Apostle further says that, if Christ be not risen, then the Apostles themselves are found false witnesses of God. Read the words :—"Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God ; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ : whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not." That stung Paul. He was proud of his honour. He had done enough to establish his title to be recognised as a lover and defender of truth. He had seen the last article of property taken away from him ; he had seen himself stripped naked ; he had been left in cold and hunger, in nakedness and thirst : and yet he was a false witness, and knew it ! Then surely there was no greater mistake ever made by man. But Paul seems in this verse to point out the absurdity of considering him and his colleagues false witnesses of God :—What have we to gain by it ? what are we profited by declaring the resurrection of Christ, if Christ did not rise from the dead ? What fruit is there in such a lie ? What harvest can grow on such barrenness of thought ? On the other hand, he never surrendered a fact. Having proved certain things to exist and to operate, there he stood : he saw them, he felt them, he knew them. Paul's Christianity was not a literary argument, it was a personal experience.

How will Paul speak of death ? Having laid down his main lines, he simply recognises the fact of death. To what a pass we have come ! We have lived so long and seen so much that if any man were to tell us that "Man is mortal," we should

charge him with triteness and with commonplace. Were any teacher now—grey, sober, calm, benignant, solicitous—to say to a congregation, “We must all die,” he would be smiled at,—“As if people did not know that,” would be the curt but pointless remark. Yes, it is possible to know it, and not to know it. No man knows, in the profoundest sense of the term “knows,” that he is mortal till within a few moments of the end. He knows it in letters, in simple statement, in common-place remark, but he does not *know* it, see it, feel it, respond to it, with the dignity of a man who has to walk through the valley of the shadow of death. We have often had occasion to see how the devil robs us of many riches, under the suggestion that our teachers are talking common-place to us. Paul recognises the fact that men are dying every day, that all men must die, that death in certain aspects has the port and the fame of a conqueror. There is something worse than common-place, and that is intelligent ignorance—the ignorance that assumes the knowledge of death, the ignorance that treats death as always afar off. Do not be ashamed of the common-places “bread and water.” Verily they are most common-place, but they are the staple of life. You can do without the fine art of bakery, but not without your mother’s skill in loaf-making; you can do without the vineyard, but not without the well where the water is. So there is an originality with which you could well dispense, but you cannot safely dispense with the jejune, trite common-place that even you must die. “All men think all men mortal but themselves.”

Paul treats death as part of a great scheme. That is the Pauline genius. If you take death out by itself and set it before you, it is most horrifying and alarming; but nothing is to be taken out and set by itself. God’s universe is a household, all the things in it belong to one another. Try to rearrange a well-proportioned building, and every touch of your hand is a desecration of its beauty. There are those who take up insulated providences and regard each in its singularity and say, Is this the goodness of God? Is this the benignity of heaven? Is this the witchery of love? Their argument is foolish because they have dislocated facts, they have wrecked the genius and the music of proportion, they have omitted the element of

atmosphere, therefore everything is disjointed, falsely related, and the whole makes a grim spectre on the outlook of man as he endeavours to forecast and estimate the future.

On the other hand, Paul made death one of a series of facts. He has birth and life and old age and death and burial and resurrection and heaven and immortality, and on and on he goes; and, looking back from his far advance, he says, "O death"—of which we were once so much afraid—"O death, where is thy sting?" It is possible to put yourselves into a false relation to death; that is to say, it is possible so to magnify death as really to hide in profane concealment the fact of life. Some men are subject to bondage all their lifetime through fear of death; they do not set it in proper series; it is something that overshadows everything else, it is invested with a false magnitude and therefore with a false importance; it is not made part of an infinite whole, in the roll and music of which it seemed to contribute its hoarse amen.

Paul looks upon dying as part of a system of progress. Dying day is not finishing day with Paul; he says, We shall meet this life again: here is an instance of the soul throwing off the body, leaving the body to its native earth, but itself going aloft and afar into the light. Paul's reasoning would seem in modern expression to be something like this:—We die into life; we die into largeness; we die into liberty,—“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.” Paul puts the body always into its right place; he says, You are of the earth, remember that; you are a common body; you, as a body, are confined to one little sphere; there is but a handful of you at the best, and in your case the tragedy will be finished off in the climax, Earth to earth, ashes to ashes; that is your little empty story; you did well, or you did badly for the time being, but beyond this sunset you had no sphere of action: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither can corruption inherit incorruption. How does death look now? It is necessary, it is part of something else, part of a magnificent whole.

Then Paul says, The whole action is in the hands of God:—

"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump : for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." Why, there we are quite put into passivity. That is even so. Read the grammar again—"the dead shall be raised incorruptible"; not, The dead shall raise themselves;—"and we shall be changed"; not, We shall change ourselves by some automatic action; "we shall be," "we shall be,"—the grammar itself is theological. Everything is under God's sovereignty. Let a man once lay hold on this thought, and there is no death, the bitterness of death is passed; there is no grave that hath in it the dignity of victory. The man who died daily could not be frightened by death as we understand that term:—"I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily": I meet death every day, and talk to him, and submit to him, and tell him just what he can do and what he cannot do: death does not like to wait on me; he comes in with some pride of heart, and some dominance of voice, but when he goes out of the door of my sanctuary he is himself dead.

How do we propose to treat death? We can, if we please, so live as to die almost like dogs. What do we say to that possibility? We can so stamp out all noble aspiration, all fine sentiment, all desire after spirituality, we can so gluttonise ourselves, and so soak ourselves in the casks of the wine-bibber and the glutton, as to have hardly any soul at all. The possibility is before any man who is envious of such reputation. A man may so die that society will look upon him, and say, What kind of a sepulchre shall he have? and society will hardly look a moment until it says, Swathe him in quicklime, and forget him! Society cannot do with too much pestilence. On the other hand, we can so live as to slip into God's heaven; we can so live that men shall say, "He was not, for God took him"; we can so live as to be so near heaven that going into it will hardly be a surprise to the trained soul; it has been so much with God, so much with Christ, it has yielded itself so entirely to the moulding and inspiring influence of the Holy Ghost, that the veil has been worn down into a film, and heaven has been a realised experience. There are men who call us in the one



direction, and there are men who call us in the other ; and the men who call us in the latter direction are the men who save society. We may sneer at them as fanatics, and condemn them, and curl the lip of scorn under their preachments, but there be no bigger cowards than the contemnners, when the tooth of death fastens upon them.

But will Paul say, Seeing what we have to do, brethren, let us make the best of it, and be quiet and careless as to the concerns of life and time ; let us drop all thought of politics and commerce and statesmanship and learning and civilisation, and let us pine "for a lodge in some vast wilderness, some boundless contiguity of shade," where we can sigh ourselves away ? Not he : that would not be Pauline. Having looked at death as a fact, and looked at death in relation to Christ, and looked at death as part of a greater thought, and as but a passage into largeness and liberty, Paul says, "Therefore—." Now the preacher is himself again : "Therefore"—more work, more steadfastness ; let us be up and doing. They cannot be far wrong who follow the leadership of such a man. His tone is health ; what he touches he elevates ; the moment he intervenes in debate or counsel or prayer, the whole vision of life changes. It would be a reproach some of us could well bear to be called "followers of Paul" ; but Paul himself, seeing us following him, says, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." We have a middle-man in science, why not a middle-man in theology ? We have the great *savant* who reads the deeper, intenser learning of the universe, but who has no gift of simple speech ; we have the giants who knock at the upper doors and find admission and hold converse with the presences that are there, but have no gifts of communicating with the lower strata, the lower ranges of life : so we have in civilisation interpreters who are not ashamed to be called middle-men, they can hear the mightier spirits, and turn their noble eloquence into common terms, so that boys at school can catch some glimmering of uppermost and farthest-reaching meanings, so that there shall be threadlets of connection between the giants and the infants. Why not have our middle-men in the highest theological relations ? There are those who can see far, and hear much, and who can hear things



which it is not lawful to utter, and they again must be interpreted; at all events there must be some indication of their meaning given, which men of lower stature and inferior quality of mind can in some degree apprehend. Sometimes we can understand Paul and not Jesus; sometimes we can understand James and not John: but as we grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, we find that they are all talking about the same thing; and that there is only variety of speech, because there is variety of receptive capacity.

I had an interview with Death.

The place, a lonely dell, winter-bound, swathed in spotless snow.  
The time, new-risen morn; the last star, paling  
As if in fear, retired but not extinguished.  
A spirit strengthened me to brave the enemy of life,  
And gave me courage to upbraid his cruelty.  
My speech I do remember well, and Death's reply.

Said I, in heightened tone, as if to keep uncertain  
Courage steadfast and ardent: "Monster, of thee  
No man speaks well: thy silent tread makes  
The house tremble, and in thy cold breath all  
Flowers die. No little child is safe from  
Thy all-withering touch: nor mothers  
Dost thou spare, nor lovers weaving life's story  
Into coloured dream, nor saints in lowly prayer.  
Why not content thyself with warring and succeeding  
In the gloomy jungle?—smite the tiger crouching  
For his prey, or the lion in his fierceness,  
Or fly after the panting wolf, or lodge  
An arrow in the heart of the proud eagle.  
Why devastate our homes? Why kill our little ones?  
Why break our hearts and mock our thirst  
With the brine of useless tears? O Death! I would  
That thou wert dead."

Then Death answered me, and filled me with amaze.  
"Believe me," said the weird defendant, "thy reasoning  
Is false, and thy reproach an unintelligent assault."

His voice was gentle, and through all his pallor  
There gleamed the outline of a smile. I saw  
Transfigured Death!

"I am God's servant. The flock must be brought home.  
I go to bring the wanderers to the fold.  
The lambs are God's, not yours; or yours but to  
Watch and tend until He sends for them.  
Through your own fatherhood read God's heart.

Through your own watching for the child's return  
Conceive the thought that glows in love divine."

He paused. Said I: "Could not some brighter  
Messenger be sent? An angel with sunlight in  
His eyes and music in his voice? Thou dost  
Affright us so, and make us die so oft in  
Dying once. If our mother could but come: or some  
Kindred soul: or old pastor whose voice  
We know: any but thou, so cold, so grim!"

"I understand thee well," said Death, "but thou dost **not**  
Understand thyself. Why does God send this cold snow  
Before the spring? Why icebergs first, then daffodils?  
My grimness, too, thou dost not comprehend.  
The living have never seen me. Only the dying  
Can see death. I am but a mask. The angel thou  
Dost pine for is behind: sometimes angel-mother,  
Sometimes father, sometimes a vanished love,  
But always to the Good and True the very image of the  
Christ. No more revile me. I am a vizored friend."

The dell was then transformed. The snow gleamed  
Like silver. The day a cloudless blue. And  
Suddenly living images filled the translucent space.  
And then I asked of Death if he could tell whence  
Came they. And he said: "These are mine.  
A reaper I, as well as shepherd. I put in the sharp sickle:  
I bound the sheaves: I garnered the precious harvest:  
And when I come angels sing, 'Harvest home.'"

J. P.

It was thus Paul saw death; it is thus the Christian views it. The Christian says of mortality, A common-place. But he is foolish who ignores the fact that he must die. "I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord . . . for they shall rest." "Therefore are they before the throne. . . . The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Call no man blessed until he is dead—he shall fall no more.

## PRAYER.

**ALMIGHTY God**, do thou teach us that thou hast thyself appointed the bounds of our habitation. Show us that there is nothing that thou dost not know, and if we be obedient unto thee there is nothing that thou wilt not appoint for us. Thou sayest, This is your house : and, This is not your habitation ; —This is the way, walk ye in it : and, This is not the way, avoid it. May we hear thy voice, and obey it with all diligence and love. Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without our Father : the very hairs of our head are all numbered : he will not suffer any of our steps to slide. Oh, that we had hearkened unto his law and kept all his statutes ! then had we never wandered, but our road had led straight into heaven's own city. We have done the things we ought not to have done, we have left undone the things we ought to have done ; we can but bow our heads and rend our hearts, and cry, God be merciful unto us sinners ! Thou hast made all things contribute to our growth, if we so use them ; even the devil himself may be made an instrument of God : if we resist the devil he will flee from us ; if we answer him in thine own words he cannot return to us with any deadly effect. Thou dost train us by perils, difficulties, trials of every name and every degree : may we not repine, and resent, and moan over these, but accept them as part of our education, as signs of thy providential reign ; and may we answer all the appeals of heaven with glowing love, so that thy statutes shall become our songs in the house of our pilgrimage. Thou hast shown some men great and sore affliction : say to them in their heart-break and darkness and blinding sorrow, Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth : and thus may scourging be made a means of grace, may loss be made the beginning of gain. All these things thou wilt teach us in the school of Christ, the blessed Christ, the dying, rising, interceding Christ, who made all things, without whom nothing was made that is made, Lord of all, because Saviour of all. May we find our rest in Christ's Cross ; may we find the answer to sin in the atonement of the Son of God. Without inventions of our own may we accept the sanctuary of thy purpose and sovereignty and love, and be at rest in the heart of Christ. Stop us in all evil ways ; may a lion meet us at every turn and affright us until we come back again to the line of duty and righteousness. When the enemy is strong upon us, may thy grace abound over all his pleading. When we are tempted to despair and to say that heaven is empty and God has gone, then shine upon us with a light above the brightness of the sun. Amen.

## 1 Corinthians xv. 35.

"But some man will say, How . . . ?"

## THE BASIS OF UNITY.

THE Apostle is discoursing upon the resurrection. He is not supposing that a man is objecting to the doctrine or the fact of resurrection, he is simply asking a question as to method or manner :—"Some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" It is vital to remember that the man is not disputing the doctrine or the fact of resurrection, he is not exciting himself in any controversial sense about that; he is puzzled as to method, way, scheme, process. I want, therefore, by adaptation of the text to show how possible it is to be right in certain great central convictions, and to be altogether in a muddle as to accidentals, exteriors, and mutable circumstances: in short, I want to find that there may be more union in the world than we suppose; that our differences are differences of opinion, and not differences of faith. "Some man will say, How?" He is not therefore to be regarded as a man who denies the fact of the resurrection. His imagination may have led him to think there may be twenty different ways by which the fact of resurrection may be realised; he is simply, therefore, on the outside, asking an outside question. If he came up and said, There is no resurrection; the Apostle is mistaken at the very centre and head of this question; there is no such thing as the anastasis on which he is elaborating his eloquence,—the case would be altogether different. But the man, instead of denying the fact or resurrection, says, How is it to be brought about, in what particular way does this resurrection take place: is it in this way, or in that? There he is simply speculating, forming opinions and offering opinions; he is not therefore a disbeliever. He who accepts resurrection is a believer. He may agree with nobody on the face of the earth as to how that resurrection is to be consummated. Have not I a right to my opinion as much as any other man? Certainly; but your opinion amounts to nothing. Opinion works within a very limited range: if you confine it within that range, and utter it modestly, every man will be glad to hear it: light comes out of friction, discussion properly

conducted is educative : but as to your having a right to your opinion, there may not be so much in the claim as one would infer from the emphasis and inclusiveness of your tone. Your opinion will change. Opinion was made to change. Opinion is but a weather sign ; it was warm yesterday, it is frosty to-day, it will be thawing to-morrow : that is the way of opinion. But the thing to be remembered is this, there are certain things that are not open to opinion. Opinion has nothing to do with them ; they live in a sanctuary that was never violated by so frivolous a trespasser as opinion. That is often forgotten, and therefore we live in continual excitement and tumult and controversy, and we have sectarianism and bigotry and internecine war on all sides of the Church ; one little bigot trying to slay another, and to make out that he is the man who carries in his little head infinity, and houses in his suspicious heart eternity. Keep opinion in its proper place. Some man will say, How ? and he has a right to say it : but if any man shall contradict certain things he is a lunatic, he is not to be tolerated at large : simply because those things do not come in for judgment at all, they come in for acceptance, and this we can prove.

Health is not a matter of opinion. It is a matter of fact. It a man should arise, and say, "In my opinion, health is of little or no consequence, and no attention ought to be paid to its cultivation," you would not listen to him. He must start with this admission, that health is of supreme importance : now, let him deal out his nostrums as he will, let him say it ought to be cultivated in this way, rather than in that ; in order to cultivate health a man ought to eat much meat, or to eat none at all ; he ought to drink water, or he ought to take some little stimulant with his food ; he ought to rise at such an hour, and retire at such a corresponding hour. *There* opinion plays and speculates and pronounces itself with more or less accurate emphasis. But opinion is not called upon to offer judgment upon the absolute necessity of health. If the Church would believe that, there would be a reconstruction of ecclesiastical Europe ; men would shake hands, who before could not do so, because each hand had a sword in it.

Law is not a matter of opinion. A law, this law, that law,

may be matters of opinion ; but the thing we are agreed upon is that law is essential. You see, therefore, how there may be a central truth on which all men are agreed, and how there may be an infinite debatable land on which men may exercise their powers of controversy until the day of doom. The mischief is that men attach far too much importance to the things that are mere matters of opinion. They should now and then say to one another, Brethren, although men have many minds, and there are a million different opinions among us as to particular laws, let us stand together on this rock, that without law, society is insecure, progress is impossible. If the Church would apply that doctrine to all the affairs with which it concerns itself, we should have many men allied in kindest fellowship, who are now living a life of religious, and therefore bitter, estrangement.

The sacredness of life is not a matter of opinion. No man would arise and say, Let us discuss whether life is sacred. Discussion is inadmissible : opinion has no standing ground here ; it must take its chatter elsewhere. Give up the sacredness of life, and you give up society, progress, education, civilisation ; you give up everything that gives value, dignity, and divinity to being. Once admit that it is of no consequence how you treat a little child, you may set your foot upon it and crush it if you like,—once admit principles of that kind, and your commonwealth is wrecked. All society must be the father of every child within it, and the poorer the child, the fatherlier should be the social instinct and the social homage and care. Here again as to varieties of methods of training life, some man will say, How is the child to be schooled ? at what age is schooling to begin ? at what age is schooling to end ? what is to be the educational process through which the child shall pass ? There you have matters of opinion, and reference must be made to the court of experience, to the arbitrator called history. But distinguish between the indisputable, called the sacredness of life, and the mutable and the opinionable, called method, process, and way of doing things. For want of knowing this the Church is a bear-garden. It would be amazing, if we were not familiar with it, into what fumes little men can throw themselves about matters of opinion, and how the less the man the bolder he will say, Have I not as much



right to my opinion as any other man? Certainly: but neither your opinion nor any other man's opinion amounts to anything in this discussion. We are pledged to the sacredness of life; now, after that, let us exchange views, let us discuss the matter, dispassionately, wisely, and hopefully. Discussion shows that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in any man's philosophy; the conflict of opinion shows that the question is larger than was at first supposed. When a man lives by himself and keeps his opinions as so many curiosities, pins them down and unpins them, and takes them up and puts them back again, and closes the case and locks them up, he is apt to think that he has seen all that God has to show: if he would come out into society, if he would debate with other men, if he would measure swords with stronger hands, if he would get into the whirl and harmony and action of things, he would find that no one man is all men, and that no one opinion is all wisdom.

Take the question of honesty. Honesty is not a matter of opinion. If we can say, Is it worth while being honest? society is gone. Society must have its rocky foundations. What would you say to a man who raised the question to you, whether honesty, after all, is a thing worth caring about? Would you appoint that man as a clerk in your office? I do not ask whether you would appoint him as a clerk in somebody else's office; I am at this moment talking about your office. The man says, Well, on the whole, as to honesty, what does it amount to? There are some things—let us repeat again and again till we get the thought well driven into our heads—that are not subject to opinion, they do not belong to the region of opinion: they are central essences, eternal verities, and when we exercise what is called judgment or form what is called opinion, we must have reference to that which is changeable, and not to that which is immutable.

For want of knowing this, Christians fall upon one another's throats, and never was so much blood shed in all the world as over the neglect of such discrimination as we are now endeavouring to point out. A man is not an infidel because he has difficulties about questions, methods, and ways; a man is not an infidel who has renounced ecclesiastical forms and

ecclesiastical orthodoxies : a man may have cut away all the outside and environment of his life, and still he may be a son of God, a brother and apostle of truth, a child of music, a citizen of the new Jerusalem.

Let us see whether we can apply these thoughts to matters more distinctively religious. The fool hath said in his heart, "There is no God." Then we have no discussion with him at all ; he is outside : but if all the world could say in one personality, "I believe in God," then any differences that may arise after that are matters of opinion, and are matters comparatively frivolous and trivial. To believe in God—call him by what name you please—God, Father, Force, Secret, Jove,—to believe in God is the vital faith. That begets reverence, awe, noblest veneration, sense of infinity and majesty ; that sets up the standard by which all other rights and claims are measured and assessed. Some man will say, How ? He must not, therefore, be called an atheist. If a man shall say, I cannot follow pulpit reasoning or Church teaching, or what is generally regarded as popular theology ; but as a man of science, and devoted to patient investigation of what I consider facts, I am bound to say that there is an inscrutable Power, a Force, a Secret,—do not call that man an atheist. He has seized the reality. He is one of the men who will say, How ? But if he asks that question modestly, tremblingly, and in the true spirit of science, which is a spirit of serenity and of hopefulness and divine imagination, he is not to be blasted as a leper and looked upon as a foe and a pestilence in society. Having got into the presence of a Force, a Secret, an Inscrutability, he may, 'by-and-by get farther. He will not get farther if you discourage him, if you take away his reputation, or make an assault upon his character ; but if he says, There is above all things, and within them, a Secret Life or Force that explains all things,—he is at God's door, the next knock, and he may be inside. There are those who take a very hostile relation to essential truths, and they are to be regarded and stigmatised and avoided accordingly. I could have no communication with a man who blatantly, immodestly, and vulgarly said, "There is no God." I do not live in his universe, I do not speak his language, I have simply nothing at all to do

with him. He is not an agnostic, he is an atheist—a denier. I draw, therefore, broad lines between a man who says, "I do not know, I wish I knew!" and the man who denies and repudiates the whole conception of God. With such persons I have no connection; I do not know them; and when they appear to be anxious to disestablish the Church, I say, Never! I prefer the Church, the Pope, to such atheism as yours.

Let us therefore carefully distinguish between a man who denies resurrection, and a man who says, "How are the dead raised up? and with what body shall they come?"—between a man who says, "There is a Force, a Secret, there is what you call God," and the man who says, "There is no God, for the only god we can worship is the sum-total of humanity."

Take another fundamental doctrine—that God only can destroy sin, or obliterate it, if that be more in harmony with scientific findings, or can neutralise it if destruction be an impossibility. Let any man assent to that, and he is evangelical. There may be different theories, even of the work of the blessed Christ; wise and learned men have differed in their interpretations of Christian doctrine, and yet they have been at one on the basis of this truth, that sin can only be neutralised by Divine agency. That is to say, it lies not within the scope of the sinner to undo his work or recreate his soul. This also admits of the proof or illustration. Man cannot undo his own work in all instances, if he can do so in any, which is questionable. Destroy a flower: now let any man undo his work, and put that flower as it was. He cannot. Let him tear one little leaf from a flower, now let him put it back again; let him undo his work. He cannot. Let a man take up the crystal vase and dash it into a thousand pieces, and put it together again as it was. He cannot. He can perform a kind of small miracle to which he may justly call the attention of his friends as exhibiting a piece of rare handiwork, but the crystal is not what it was before. There is plenty of riveting, and cementing, and covering up of defects and flaws done with great skill, but the crystal is wounded at the heart, it cannot be undone. Recall a sound. You have uttered a word—bring it back. You cannot. It must go on long as eternity

endures. Science has its mysteries as well as theology. Now the reasoning may stand thus : if a man cannot undo the work of his hand, how can he undo the work of his heart ? If he cannot put together a crystal which he has broken, how can he put together a character which he has shattered ? If a man cannot recall a sound uttered by his own voice, how can he recall some act of treason, some deed of felony against the throne of God ?

Here we find the basis of true union. Do not go up and down amongst a man's opinions asking which of them you can adopt : inquire into the man's central purpose and thought and life ; how does the man stand fundamentally, in relation to vital and essential truths ? and having discovered that, join him in fellowship, and say, regarding opinions, Do not exaggerate their importance, do not look upon them as final ; it is the delight of life to grow in judgment, to vary in opinion ; this is a sign of vitality, and educative progress and civilisation, but we are agreed in this, are we not ? that we believe in God. Things are not under the rule of what is called fortuitousness or chance, or the misrule of mere accident ; there is above all things and within them a shaping Hand, a directing Mind, a sovereign Power : on that let us hold sweet fellowship ; let us weep together, it need be, before this great mystery that we may be strengthened by the very expression of our emotions. We do believe in this, do we not ? that man cannot undo his own sin ; that if it is to be undone or neutralised it must be done by Divine agency. Are we agreed there ? Then let us hold fellowship, communion ; and let us never forget that we have seen that the forgiveness of sin is nothing short of a Divine miracle : as to theories, opinions, speculations, theological dreamings, and imaginings, we have nothing to do with these ; we are at one on a greater central fact.

Recur to the question : if a man were to say to you, "There is no such thing as honesty," what would you think of him ? Suppose a man should say to you, "There is no such thing as truth," what judgment would you form about that man's character ? how far would you trust him ? in what estimation would you hold every word he utters ? Suppose a man should say to you, "Virtue is an impossibility : there is no virtue : it

is a mere name," would you admit him to your household confidence, would you open the door to him, and bid him heartily welcome to your hospitality? Has he not a right to his opinion as much as any other man may have? He says, "There is no honesty—I have come to see you: there is no truth—I have come to spend an evening at your fireside: there is no virtue—I have come to make my home in your house." How would that suit? We are not now talking theology: we are talking the kind of common-sense without which society cannot co-exist one moment. Here you insist upon unity, faith in essential verities: yet when a man says, "There is no God," we are prone to represent him as a very vigorous and independent thinker. I say no. He was right who called him "fool." But how we contradict ourselves; in what a mesh of inconsistency we live! If a man should say to us, "There is no truth, there is no honesty, there is no virtue, there is no right, there is no wrong," we should avoid that man as we should avoid a pest: but if a man shall deny all these things, which he really does, though not apparently, by denying the existence of God, we call him an advanced thinker, a progressive and independent mind. I do not. I say that any man who denies the existence of God is the most dangerous character that lives. I will refer you to the consummation of his life. I have never known a man give up what we call religion, that is, in its essentials and fundamentals, and grow; he never grew in tenderness, in sympathy, in beneficence, in love of art, in love of music, in love of children. He cannot grow. The economy of the universe is dead against him. Many a man I have known who was not distinguished for greatness and energy of mind, but who has been distinguished by simplicity and earnestness of religious faith, whose life has been a continual and beneficent progress; he has mellowed, softened, chastened, and become more generous, more charitable, more helpful to his neighbour. To accept God is to grow up into light and liberty and manhood. This is the testimony we bear, and the flying years do not diminish—they intensify—our emphasis.



## THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE

TO THE

## CORINTHIANS.

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[NOTE.—The Second Epistle to the Corinthians “was written a few months subsequently to the first, in the same year,—and thus, if the dates assigned to the former Epistle be correct, about the autumn of A.D. 57 or 58, a short time previous to the Apostle’s three months’ stay in Achaia (Acts xx. 3). The place whence it was written was clearly not Ephesus (see chap. i. 8), but Macedonia (chap. vii. 5, viii. 1, ix. 2), whither the Apostle went by way of Troas (chap. ii. 12), after waiting a short time in the latter place for the return of Titus (chap. ii. 13).

“The contents of this Epistle are very varied, but may perhaps be roughly divided into *three* parts:—1st, the Apostle’s account of the character of his spiritual labours, accompanied with notices of his affectionate feelings towards his converts (chaps. i.—vii.); secondly, directions about the collections (chaps. viii., ix.); thirdly, defence of his own Apostolical character (chap. x.—xiii. 10). A close analysis is scarcely compatible with the limits of the present article, as in no one of the Apostle’s Epistles are the changes more rapid and frequent. Now he thanks God for their general state (chap. i. 3, sq.); now he glances to his purposed visit (chap. i. 15, sq.); now he alludes to the special directions in the first letter (chap. ii. 3, sq.); again he returns to his own plans (chap. ii. 12, sq.), pleads his own Apostolic dignity (chap. iii. 1, sq.), dwells long upon the spirit and nature of his own labours (chap. iv. 1, sq.), his own hopes (chap. v. 1, sq.), and his own sufferings (chap. vi. 1, sq.), returning again to more specific declarations of his love towards his children in the faith (chap. vi. 11, sq.), and a yet further declaration of his views and feelings with regard to them (chap. vii.). Then again, in the matter of the alms, he stirs up their liberality by alluding to the conduct of the Churches of Macedonia (chap. viii. 1, sq.), their spiritual progress (ver. 7), the example of Christ (ver. 9), and passes on to speak more fully of the present mission of Titus and his associates (ver. 18, sq.), and to reiterate his exhortations to liberality (chap. ix. 1, sq.). In the third portion he passes into language of severity and reproof; he gravely warns those who presume to hold lightly his Apostolical authority (chap. x. 1, sq.); he puts strongly forward his Apostolical dignity (chap. xi. 5, sq.); he illustrates his forbearance (ver. 8, sq.); he makes honest boast of his labours (ver. 23, sq.); he declares the revelations vouchsafed to him (chap. xii. 1, sq.); he again



returns to the nature of his dealings with his converts (ver. 12, sq.); and concludes with grave and reiterated warning (chap. xiii. 1, sq.), brief greetings, and a doxology (ver. 11-14).”—SMITH'S *Dictionary of the Bible*.]

## 2 Corinthians i.

### “THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT.”

PAUL had promised to go a second time to Corinth, but he did not go; so there were people in the Church who said that he was afraid to go, and that he would never come. Paul always wanted a great deal of room, and there were always some people who begrudged him the space which belonged to him by natural and Divine right. Some did not understand him; a few did not care for him; a sprinkling of people may be said to have been almost dead against him. This was the chance of the last little pact:—Where is he? said they. With well-assumed innocence they inquired of the Paulites where their master was: said they, Has he come to Corinth? did he arrive last night? are you expecting him to-day? And thus with quite a new spite—for no spite can be so stinging as pseudo-Christian spite—they reminded the followers of the greatest man that ever lived in Christ's Church that a promise had not been fulfilled. What would some people do, if there were no mischief to be done? How could they find any employment, if all possibility of wrongdoing were taken away from them? They would have nothing to speak about, if you deprived them of their slander; they would be dumb dogs, if they had not to snarl at some majesty. The Apostle had heard of all this. He writes this second letter to the Corinth Church at many sittings. We shall make great mistakes in reading the epistles if we think they were all written so as to catch the first post. The Apostle knew nothing about posts and times. When he had a letter to write he took months to do it, and he did not always ask his amanuensis where he left off last. It was a great royal soul that rolled on after a law of its own; hence the abruptness, the so-called incoherence, the sharp contrast and conflict of Paul's rhetorical style. Apollos was smooth; he rolled on like a stream of oil: Paul was rugged, often unconnected, and sometimes utterly without a copulative so as to connect the one with the other; yet all the while there was in it, not a literal, but a vital consistency.

He is very solemn in this introduction. He never excelled himself—that master of noble words—he never excelled himself so much as in verse 4. He is thanking God for "all comfort," and he describes God as, "Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." Mark the rhythm, the liquid plash, of this sacred ennobling music. We have often commented upon the word "comfort" as used by the Apostle Paul, and as used by other New Testament writers. "Comfort" does not mean, in their sense and use of the term, mere pacification, lulling, the creation of a species of moral and spiritual atrophy: the comfort of God is the encouragement of God, the stimulus of the most High applied to the human mind and the human heart. When God vivifies us he comforts us; instead of putting his fingers upon our eyelids and drawing them down over tired eyes and saying, Now sleep a long sleep, he sometimes gives us such an access of life that we cannot lie one moment longer; we spring forth as men who have a battle to fight and a victory to bring home. That access of life is the comfort of God, as well as that added sleep, that extra hour of slumber which is a tender benediction. Why was the Apostle comforted, vivified, or encouraged? That he should be able to comfort them which are in trouble. Why does God give us money? To make use of it for the good of others. Why does God make a man very strong? That he may save a man who is very weak, by carrying his burden for him an hour or two now and then, so as to give the man some sense of holiday. Why does the Lord make one man very penetrating in mind, very complete in judgment, very serene and profound in counsel? Not that he may say, Behold me! but that he may sit in the gate and dispense the bounty of his soul to those who need all manner of aid, all ministries of love.

The Apostle has a long passage to his point, but he comes to it in the eighth verse, there saying in effect: Now ye Corinthians, hear me: you have misunderstood this delay in my appearance altogether: there is one circumstance of which you have never heard; you do not know that in Asia I was as nearly dead as a man could be not to be in his grave:—"For we would not,

brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life"; I was in Asia hanging by the last thread; you never heard of that; now you have heard of it you will perhaps be larger and truer in your judgment of my movements: this is the first time I have really communicated this fact to my friends, but in Asia I was nearly dead; I was given up; men of medical knowledge could do no more for me; nurse and friend said it was all over. Now he praises God, in the tenth verse, in these terms, "Who delivered us from so great a death." That word "great" is a qualifying term of course, but it is a term which refers not so much to quantity "great" as to quality "great," and therefore it might be rendered, "Who delivered us from so terrible a death,"—a most deathly death, death in its ghastliest form. Why, saith the Apostle, this was a resurrection (ver. 9) "that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead;"—saying in effect, I was dead; to all human intents and purposes, I was an extinct man: thus is the resurrection proved and tested in my own instance. Thus the Apostle always softened argument by experience, and substantiated reasoning by referring to something which he himself had personally gone through. Paul could have no doubt about resurrection after that Asian trouble. If it became a mere argument in words, he might have some difficulty in getting words large enough and fine enough to fit so vast and delicate a subject, but if it came to the large language of consciousness, what a man's own soul has known, Paul has no difficulty whatever about the possibility and actuality of the resurrection.

Yet that delicacy, that large refinement, that supreme gentlemanliness, in the old rich sense of the word, so characteristic of Paul, comes into play in ver. 11. He would have the Corinthians made out to be really the helpers or allies of God in this great resurrectional act, saying, "Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf." The argument is this:—As you prayed for me in all things, not knowing the particulars, so you may now on hearing the particu-

lars turn up your faces,—that is the literal signification of this image, "many persons," many upturned faces,—may throw back heaven's light upon itself, that so there may be a great sacrifice of thanksgiving. The Apostle told the Corinthians that he was under the impression that they were always praying for him. It may have been delicate satire, it may have been one of those characteristic ironies which make Paul's style so varied and so surprising: but he always gave men credit for doing what they ought to have done, and thus made a tremendous thrust upon their consciences; as who should say, You have always been liberal, you have always been kind, I have never been one hour out of your thoughts. And the people said, That is the opinion he has been forming about us! what a false judgment! may he never know! For months together we never thought of him, and we have let the flowers wither in the garden rather than send him one little nosegay, and the poor deluded soul has been under the impression that all the time we were thinking about him. O Paul, thou wast many men in one!

Returning to the personal side of the question, he said, "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to youward": we have heard the rumours, we understand what is going on in slanderous circles about my not coming to Corinth, but our rejoicing is this, that the conscience says, they are wrong and you are right; they do not know what they are talking about, but your conduct is founded upon solid and just reasoning: that is where we stand. "In simplicity,"—in a single folio, or, as it were, one open sheet, so that every one can see the four corners and all that is written between. That is simplicity, the opposite of duplicity, which is the doubled sheet, so that you cannot tell what is written upon it without turning it over, as if by some stroke of cunning, as if quietly, so that nobody might suspect the action. Simplicity is an open hand, duplicity is a clenched fist: Paul always acted the part of an open-handed gentleman. "And godly sincerity,"—literally, the sincerity of God: either a Greek or a Hebrew expression, as you please; if a Hebrew expression, how simple, for the Hebrew

has no superlative. The English says, Good, better, best : but the Hebrew cannot take that course. If the Hebrew would describe a beautiful garden, it says, A garden of God : if a noble forest, the Hebrew would say, These are trees of God,—meaning the finest, grandest, shaggiest old kings that ever adorned the mountain side. So the Apostle says, “that sincerity of God,”—a new grammar, requiring the very highest term in thought to express the very highest quality in character. “Not with fleshly wisdom :” we are not so much statesmen as God’s-men ; we are not merely acute, we are spiritually enlightened ; we are not only sagacious, we have the gift of the Spirit, which is a gift of discernment : do not credit us with cleverness, credit us and credit God with inspiration.

He makes this more clear in the thirteenth verse :—“For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge.” That is to say, we do not write in an unnatural sense ; when a child reads my word a child knows my meaning. Paul does not need any moral glossary in order to explain what he has been talking about. When he says, Yes, he means yes ; Nay, nay ; there is an end of him. “We write none other things unto you than what ye read,”—in its plain, simple, natural, straightforward sense,—“or acknowledge”—have knowledge of : we have not a private verbal mint in which we coin words of ecclesiastical meaning and pass these amongst people, so that we may have a commerce of our own ; we use our mother’s speech in our mother’s sense. That is apostolic sincerity. “Sincerity” itself is a pictorial word. It is the act of the wary chapman who, having somewhat to sell or buy, holds it to the sun. That is sincerity,—transparency ; that which the sun goes through and through without discovering speck or flaw. This was the man whom certain nameless Corinthians were slandering, and saying that he had talked of coming to Corinth but he knew better than to come. Many persons were bold in Paul’s absence. Many persons go to the Zoological Gardens who are religiously thankful for the bars of iron. Oh, the boldness of these people ! What makes them bold ? The bars. Remove the bars—where are they ? So many people were exceedingly critical and bold and even denunciatory in the



absence of Paul who were not at home when he arrived on the spot. Paul never needed to strike any man twice. When he erects himself and says, "But as God is true, our word toward you" was true, he shows what Christianity does for a man when it has free course and is glorified in his nature. There are heroic moments in which earnest souls link themselves to God and say, We stand or fall together. These moments make us men; these moments make immortality possible. To live under this sense of truth, to know that through and through we are true in every particle and jot and iota, to know that our meaning is after the pattern of God's sincerity,—that is the supreme joy of Christian life. Paul will not have yea, yea, nay, nay, and yea and nay mixed up together, as if he were trying to pronounce both the words in one hot breath. He will have each word pronounced distinctly. Paul believed in moral articulation; no jumbling of syllables in this mighty rhetoric. Paul was an honest man. When he said Yes, he said it subject to an inscrutable Providence,—I may be killed, I may be drawn to death in the wilds of Asia, I may be subject to contingencies which do not come within human calculation. Every man's yes must be subject to these possibilities, but when he says, Yes, his soul must mean it. Why? Because the Christian is of the same quality as Christ himself, for the Son of God Jesus Christ was not yea and nay; Christ did not walk on both sides of the road, Christ was not hail-fellow-well-met with people who told lies and made a convenience of language: Christ was the eternal Yes, or the eternal No. Paul says, We belong to Christ; because, therefore, we belong to Christ we cannot palter with language. Thus Paul was more than a merely metaphysical theologian. Paul brought his theology down into his morality, into his conduct, into his daily speech; Paul's words were sacraments. All this is worth dwelling upon, because it shows what Jesus Christ does for every man who really trusts him, loves him, obeys him. This is what Christianity would do in the world. It would put an end to all ambiguity, to all ambidextrousness, so that a man shall not be as clever with the left hand as he is with the right. Christianity does not make conjurors, Christianity makes honest men. When Jesus said, "Let your Yea be yea, and your Nay be nay," he revolutionised



the world. If this could be brought about in the simplicity and fulness of its meaning, the world would be at peace for evermore. Yet how a simple a thing to say! The Preacher on the Mount said to us to-day, Let your Yea be yea, and your Nay be nay;—such common-place did that man talk, though robed as rabbi and speaking *ex cathedra*, the mountain being his chair. You are wrong. If Jesus Christ had never said one word more, he would have revolutionised the whole construction of society. When you say Yes, mean yes; when you say No, mean no; do not becloud a subject with words; do not be having one word on the tongue and another word in the heart; be sincere, transparent, through-and-through men. That is what Jesus Christ himself said. The Apostle, having partaken of that quality by the grace of God, is annoyed when he hears it is possible for some vagabonds even in Corinth—that most drunken, dissolute, disorderly church that ever existed—to suspect his sincerity. He falls back on the same thread of argument even in his sublime statement of the doctrine of the resurrection; he says, “If Christ be not risen from the dead, then we are liars.” And we cannot conceive of the possibility of any man thinking that the Apostles were liars. May we live on these lofty mountains! They are the first to catch the sunlight.

## 2 Corinthians i. 19.

"The Son of God, Jesus Christ . . . was not yea and nay, but in him was yea."

### THE EVERLASTING YEA.

THIS is the very finest conception of the personality and the purpose, the kingship and the rule of the Son of God. We may get at the meaning of these words by paraphrase rather than by translation. Any translation is rugged. In him was Amen. That "Amen" was his own word. No man used it so frequently. It was only his own word because it was his own self. That is one of his names:—"These things saith the Amen." When did Jesus say Amen? I answer by putting another inquiry—When did he ever say anything else? He said it thirty-one times in the Gospel according to Matthew; in the Gospel according to Mark we have fourteen instances of it; in the Gospel according to Luke he says Amen seven times, and in the Gospel according to John we find this same Amen, single and double, five-and-twenty times. Now we see what the text is:—In him was So-be-it—Yes—Amen. That is the Christ of God. Not a double-minded man, not here and there, not going east and west, but the same yesterday, to-day, for ever; not the empty mocking No, but the everlasting satisfying Yes. Christ has well been called the incarnate Amen of God. In him all the promises are Yea and Amen; in him God says, Now take what you will: you call for my promises, there they are; you ask for my redemption, here it is; you have been praying to me for centuries for some great positive answer, behold it: this Son of Mary, Son of Man, is the Amen of God.

How did he use the Amen so frequently? for we do not remember to have heard it, unless it be at the close of what is known as the Lord's Prayer; then the word Amen does occur. But the word Amen is not a word to be used in prayer only, unless we make prayer the greatest exercise of the soul, which

it ought to be made, the finest and completest expression of life, thought, purpose, and design. Jesus Christ began his speeches with Amen:—"Amen, amen, I say unto you." In our old quaint English we have it, "Verily, verily:" what Christ said was in our English pronunciation, Amen, amen,—So-be-it, Yes,—the everlasting affirmation. That is our Saviour. We know what it is to have to deal with some people who never can be brought to Yes. They speculate, they doubt, they wonder, they conjecture, they make hypotheses, they invent theories; you can bind them down to nothing. It is so with all the other teachers of the world; they have a genius in the matter of conjecture; they guess well, they reason strongly, but they are always afraid of their own reason; throughout their strongest asseverations there runs a tone hesitant, double, equivocal,—it may be so or thus, and some other man may be right when he suggests the contradiction of this theory. In Christ on the contrary is "Yea"—that which is decisive, definite, positive, complete, unchangeable. "Other men have said unto you . . . but I say unto you; other men have brought you proverbs, I bring you philosophies; other men have been liberal in conjectures, I am the revelation of God." That is his tone; that is the standard by which he wishes to be judged.

We cannot live on negations. Yet we are deluded into the belief that negation is at least one aspect of cleverness. Negations have never done the best work in the world. They have been useful, but in a limited and measurable degree. We have known negations in arithmetic. Arithmetic is not the art of doubting. Arithmetic has its points, lines, conclusions, but if you do not accept them you cannot be an arithmetician, you cannot calculate, you cannot reckon upon this planet. Euclid has his axioms. He would not talk to us if we did not accept them all at once. He says, You have no business in this book if you doubt the axioms; they must be accepted. They are no negations, they are affirmations; they are the everlasting Yes in geometry. Law aims to be definite, positive, conclusive. It has to struggle its way up very far before it reaches the point of settlement; yet law is always aiming at finality. It begins a long way down, before the well-meaning magistrate, who is glad to hand it on

to the next court, which in its turn is very thankful to get rid of it so that it may be discussed in the Court of Appeal, which mumbles over it, and clouds about it, and stupefies itself over it, and says silently, Thank God, it must go to the House of Lords. But when it gets there it is written in the books, and there it is. That was the object from the beginning, to get at definiteness, to get at Yes. Christ begins where all other men begin, and whilst they end hesitantly he ends positively, as he began positively :—Verily, verily, Amen, amen, Yes, yes, I say unto you.

Why this tone of decision and clearness? Why this pomp of definiteness? Because the Lord Christ is not a speculator but a Saviour. When the life-boat goes out it does not go out to reason with the drowning men but to lay hold of them. When the sea is sunny, when the air is a blessing, then boats may approach one another, and talk to one another more or less merrily and kindly, and as it were upon equal terms; but when the wind is alive, when the sea and sky seem to have no dividing line, and death has opened its jaws to swallow up, as if in a bottomless pit, all its prey, then the life-boat says, We have not come out here to reason and to conjecture and to bandy opinions with you, but to seize you and save you. That is what Christ has come for,—The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost: God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life: I am not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. You never can save a man by saying no to him; the only thing that can save the soul is the everlasting Yes, the Verily of everlasting love. There were two classes of men in the Middle Ages, both about as busy as they could be. The one class was called the Crusaders. They were up early in the morning, they were up late at night; they handled their weapons well, they had keen ears for the approach of the enemy; they were fighters, they were inflamed with an infatuated enthusiasm. The other men were not fighters, they were cathedral-builders. Where are the Crusaders? I do not know. Where are the other men? At Canterbury, at Westminster, at York; all through the area of Europe. But the Crusaders were stalwart men and made a noise whenever they went from home; but they

were "No" men, they were men who put down, they were aggressive, they were soldiers, in a sense they were madmen : destruction was their accompanying evil angel. The other men were builders, and the builders last longer than the fighters. Blessed be God, this is true. Why not build more ? Why not do the positive, constructive, edifying work ? All this red-coated demonstration, all this thirst for glory and for blood, is, for the moment, very dazzling and very wonderful, and constitutes *in posse* a magnificent newspaper property ; but building—slow, stately, tranquil building—it abides when the mere mechanical assistants and contractors have passed away. It is even so with this Christ of God. He is a cathedral-builder ; he has his fighting times ; none can fight like Christ : but he only fights that he may have room to build in ; he is building the cathedral of manhood, he is putting up the temple of regenerated human nature ; he is the everlasting Yes : and as we work for him and work with him a great voice fills the air like music poured out from some larger world, Verily, verily, I say unto you. Christ is a builder. The Church is a building. There are very clever men who are doing nothing. They are reading very able papers to most reverential audiences of wood—audiences which never stop nor interrupt them or find fault with them, and which care nothing about them. They can prove to demonstration that if  $x$  be multiplied by  $x$ , and the whole be squared up by  $y$  and  $w$ , no power in the universe can tell what the end will be : and the wood stands there, and so the matter ends. This is no Gospel ; it is a kind of intellectual quarrel with some other intellectual thing, both invisible, both anonymous, both fighting in the dark, both stone-blind : and thus it comes to nought multiplied by nought, equal to nought. Jesus Christ comes in with definite offers, special promises, with an eternal affirmation, —Yes, yes, is the music-speech of Christ. See if this be not so. Hear him ; never man spake like this Man. Why art thou here, thou Son of God, an angel far from home ? Listen :—"I am come that they might have life." That is the everlasting Yea, the eternal Positive. Why art thou here, thou Son of God ? this world is not for thee ; we have spoiled it—hence ! Listen :—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." It is the eternal constructive, the donation

positive. Other men will give me a new argument, will turn the subject round and ask me to view it in various phases ; they will try to alleviate my disquietude by changing its points and its balances, but never reducing its solid quantity. This Man, come whence he may, says he will give me what I want—"rest." Let us go and see what he is about. What is he giving? Bread. But if there be no more bread? That is impossible; when he touches it he multiplies it; when he gives it away he has more of it. But if the bread in a literal sense should fail, he will give us his flesh; and as for wine, he will tap the fountain of his heart that we die not for want of sustenance. This is his scheme; this is his way of doing things; this is the everlasting Yea, the Verily, Verily of God. But death will overcome us, death will take us away; what will Jesus do then? He has provided a Yes with which to oppose the negative of death. What is the Yes of Christ in relation to the No of death? It is—hear it—a long word, long as the duration of God,—it is resurrection! He hunts negation out of its last den, robs it of its last prey, and sits himself down at the right hand of God, the Amen the everlasting Yes. Why do we not seek for the positive, the constructive, and the eternal? You hear a discourse, and what is the suggestion of the enemy to your soul? It is to disagree with it. Satan lives in negation; he would have no ministry but for denial; he began by contradicting, and his whole genius is limited to that meanest of ministries. Instead of retiring from the service, saying, "I had bread to-day, my soul feasted bountifully at the table of the Lord," the enemy says, Now, how far did you agree with it? and you say, I did not agree with that view. There you are lost. It is not what you do not agree with, but what you accept, that is going to save you. Ye are saved by faith.

Here then we stand. This is how Christ must be preached. He must be preached in his own spirit. Christ is not yea and nay; Christ is not hesitant, variable, uncertain, double-minded. Yet Christ is being preached negatively to-day. We want the Gospel offered, not the Gospel defended. We want the Gospel preached, and not preached about. The word "about" is the pit that swallows up many a ministry. All that Jesus asks of us is to tell positive truth, to offer positive blessing, to call men



to the positive Christ, which means the positive pardon, the positive peace, and the positive heaven. So the Apostle preached Christ, the positive Christ, the living Christ, the present Christ, the Christ of the Cross, the Christ who shed his blood to save the world.

Nothing is easier than to suggest doubts and difficulties, and to ask questions. There are some lines of inquiry along which it is right to ask questions because only by asking them can we make progress; there are other questions of an elementary kind which can be asked with a sincere, simple heart; the Lord invites us to put such inquiries to him, and he will answer us; but there are other questions which are born of conceit and intellectual pedantry and mere vanity of soul, and these vex and torment the mind, and heaven will not condescend to answer them. Heaven has nothing to say to pride, heaven only speaks to humbleness of soul. From contrition of heart heaven will withhold no blessing, no good thing will the Lord withhold from them that walk uprightly. This holds good in the communication of spiritual truth and spiritual blessing, as well as in the conferring of physical comfort and physical protection. Think of Christ as a great Yes. When you lay your case of distress before your friend what you want from him is not a critical argument upon your imprudence in having brought yourself into a state of destitution, you want his genial, generous Yes. There are many men wonderfully able in telling other people that they ought not to have come into trouble. If rebukes could feed the world such men would make gluttons of the universe. They point out where the man got wrong; they tell him with a tongue sharper than a two-edged sword that he ought not to have got wrong at that point; they lacerate him, scalp him, and vivisection him, and turn him out into the cold. They represent the everlasting No. One little loaf of bread would have been better than all the lecturing; it would have prepared the way for the right sort of exhortation. This is Christ's representation of himself to the world, and this is his representation of God. He says that, if we will go back with a prayer of confession upon our lips, the Lord will not allow us to get through it; he will allow us to begin it, but before we have ended it he will smother us in his arms. Blessed be God for the eternal verity!

## 2 Corinthians iii. 9.

"For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory."

### THE TWO MINISTRATIONS.

**W**HAT is the meaning of the expression, "ministration of condemnation"? The answer is in the seventh verse of this chapter, "But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away;"—whence it is obvious that the phrase "ministration of condemnation" relates to the law which Moses received amid the pomp and majesty of Sinai. That law is also called "the ministration of death." The Apostle is presenting a contrastive view of two systems under which it has pleased God to develop and test moral life; hence those systems are antithetically designated "the ministration of death," and "the ministration of the Spirit," as also "the ministration of condemnation," and "the ministration of righteousness." As the method of argument is entirely antithetical and contrastive, the definition of one term suggests the definition of the other; so that, as "the ministration of condemnation" signifies the law which came by Moses, so "the ministration of righteousness" signifies the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ. The simple form of the text, consequently, is this—"If the law of Moses be glory, much more doth the Gospel of Christ exceed in glory."

Why should the law be described as "the ministration of death" or "the ministration of condemnation"? Are not the terms unnecessarily harsh? Do they not suggest a false idea of the dignity of law? My first object is to defend a negative answer to this inquiry. The very fact of penal law being established presupposes either power or disposition to do that which is wrong. Not only so; it is the peculiar function of

penal law to define and abridge the so-called liberty of man. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." In delineating his spiritual life, in all its struggling and victories, through all phases which moral being could possibly assume, the Apostle gives us to understand how law operated in the settlement of his convictions and duties: "I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." The simplest of illustrations shall bring the meaning of the assertion, that law defines and limits liberty, within the comprehension of a child. For a length of time you have been in the habit of regarding certain fields as common property; again and again you have struck your course across them to shorten or vary a journey. You were totally indifferent as to their proprietorship. The idea that you were trespassing never occurred to you. So far as you knew, there was no law whatever in the case. In process of time, however, the proprietor determines to assert his right to his own land. With this end in view, he gives public intimation that all persons found upon his property will be dealt with as trespassers. He proclaims a law. He sets up in his field a ministration of condemnation. From that hour the whole question of your liberty undergoes a fundamental change. The altered circumstances compel all who have been in the habit of traversing the land with impunity to say, in effect, "In this case we had not known transgression, except the law had said, Thou shalt not trespass." Yet, why should the law be designated "the ministration of condemnation" and "the ministration of death"? When the law is based on rectitude, what possible relation can it sustain to death or condemnation? The terms, though severe, are distinguished by the most precise accuracy. All punishment stands on the plane of death. Death, absolutely so called, is the ultimate penalty; but the very gentlest blow, nay, the very shadow of a frown, is death in incipiency; that is to say, it belongs to the kingdom of death, and not in any sense to the kingdom of life; death is in the penalty as truly as the plant is in the seed. The judge who imprisons a criminal for a month, or even for a day, gives that criminal as much of death as the nature of the offence is deemed to require. Why, what is death? You say that a man is dead when his heart ceases to

beat. I tell you that a man may be dead even while his heart is pulsing with the vigour of perfect health ! The hardened wretch who climbed the scaffold with a smile, and swung across the invisible barrier with a curse on his curled lip, is not, if the expression be allowed, half so dead as the fair young creature on whose cheek there burns the memorial of a first disgrace. The death I speak of is a question of moral consciousness. The physical heart continues its beating, but the better heart, which it enshrines, withers and dies.

That law is correctly designated "the ministration of condemnation," and "the ministration of death," may be shown by another simple illustration. Let me suppose that as heads of houses you had not for a long time felt the necessity of requiring all the members of your households to be at home by a fixed hour. Had they returned at seven, eight, or nine, they would have been received with equal cordiality. In the working of your family life, however, you find it necessary to determine an hour at which every child shall be with you. To that effect you proclaim your law. In process of events, I further suppose, one of your children is a mile off when the well-known hour strikes. What is the consequence in his own experience ? He hears stroke after stroke without alarm, until, alas ! the legal hour is pealed off. How that stroke shakes him ! how harsh the vibration ! how reproachful the shivering tone ! A week before, he could have heard the same hour strike, and could have sung to it. Nothing would have alarmed him. No ghostly accuser would have been upon his track. He now feels that the law is "the ministration of condemnation." He says, "I am late ; I should have been at home ; my father's eye will reprove me : I had not known sin but by the law, for I had not known irregularity in time, except the law had said, Thou shalt be punctual."

Take the world's first case of law. There was law in the Edenic life. There was a "Thou shalt not" in the programme of the world's first experience of manhood, and over it fell the shadow of threatened death. Liberty was made liberty by law. Up to the very moment of touching the forbidden fruit, Adam knew not what was meant by the "ministration of condemnation" ; but the moment after, how vast his knowledge ! The taste

of that fruit could not be expelled from his mouth ; it was there as a malignant poison, for which no plant in paradise held the cure ; the very tree looked hell at him, and a leaf from its desecrated branches might have crushed him to the earth. Why all this ? The explanation is in the law. The law said nothing to Adam of "condemnation" until he had broken it. So long as he kept the law, he knew nothing of death, except by observation. What it was for man to die it was impossible he should know ; but when the forbidden sap entered him, the inner man fell back blind, chilled, dead ! Fools are they who cavil because Adam did not physically expire. Is life a question of perpendicularity ? Is death a question of frozen marrow ? Is manhood a question of bones ? Every man knows the killing power of sin. In darkness you have done some deed of iniquity. The red mark of guilt is on the palm of your right hand. Your heart condemns you. When you come forward to the light, you feel yourself dead ; your moral vitality is gone ; your eye can no longer return the inquiring glance of society ; you would knit your own shroud of fig leaves, and would gladly escape God as you seek to return to the dust. Ah ! death is a process of the soul. Dead men walk on their own graves. The soul is in the chambers of death long ere the body yields up the ghost.

Another inquiry is now suggested. Under circumstances so appalling, how can "the ministration of condemnation" be said to be "glory?"—for that is the royal word of the text. What "glory" can there possibly be in "the ministration of condemnation" and "the ministration of death?" I answer, the glory is not in the condemnation and the death, except in their immediate connection with law. That there is glory in law is open to decisive demonstration. The establishment of law implies authority on the part of the lawgiver. Law is the declared will of the superior. I wish it to be felt that this is true not only in the highest regions of legislation, but necessarily as true in the simplest relations of social life. How is it amongst ourselves ? Does the servant give law to the master, or the master to the servant ? By whose authority is the table of regulations put up in all your great hives of industry ? The principle that authority is with the superior is essential to the consolidation and govern-



ment of society. Relax it, and society is at once disorganised ! We must be governed, and we must be governed by one another ; and of necessity society will gravitate around its highest forces. I repeat, then, that law implies authority on the part of the law-giver. Carry these illustrations forward to the case argued in the text, then the "glory" will at once kindle upon us, and, like the children of Israel, we shall need the protecting vail. Recall the dread days of Sinai. Almighty God alights, and the mountain shudders at his presence. There, amid thunderings and lightnings, the "Thou shalt" and the "Thou shalt not" of Infinite Wisdom are given to man, accompanied by an institutionalism as gorgeous as it is complex. Every utterance of the eternal mind must have its own peculiar glory ; alike the utterance designed to produce physical results, and the utterance intended to operate in the moral kingdom : each shines with a glory distinctively its own, and in proportion as the moral is superior to the physical, so does the glory of the one exceed the glory of the other. The Israelites were hemmed in by law. They were beset behind and before, and the hand of the legislator was laid upon them. When they turned to worship, there was a "Thou shalt" that exterminated all idols, and shut the worshipper in with one God. When they associated with families, there was a "Thou shalt" that demanded filial reverence. When they were thrown together in masses, there were regulations intended to preserve the integrity, and purity, and blessedness of the vast population. In such a law, brocade with the most gorgeous ritualism, there must have been "glory." It was the utterance of the Infinite Intelligence. It marked a distinct epoch in the moral training of the world. It was a protest, in flame and blood, against every form of error. It declared, by more than implication, that there was immense evil in the world, and that moral life among men was under the immediate scrutiny of God. That solemn law was a vital part of the education through which God was conducting the young and wayward world. That law was alike a standard of rectitude and a prophecy of a judgment day. From the very beginning, man was given to understand that all things should converge to a great judicial crisis, and that whoso broke through the groundwork of Divine law would find, when he reached the under side, that he had arrived in the unbottomed abyss of death ! Yea, there was



nothing between man and death but the "Thou shalt" and the "Thou shalt not" of Divine legislation! Just that. There was but a step between man and death. When, therefore, I contemplate the dread issue of an infraction of God's law, I can understand the Apostle when he calls that law "the ministration of condemnation"; and as I further contemplate the sublime purpose of that law, I can understand how, upon such a "ministration," there shone a "glory" which must have beamed from heaven!

The Gospel is described as "the ministration of righteousness," and is affirmed to "exceed in glory." In giving the law, God did not accommodate himself to human weakness by imposing easy or elastic conditions and regulations. He declared that which was absolute in rectitude. There was no tampering with righteousness. There was no shortening of the standard. You inquire, then, who could keep this rigorous, inflexible law? Could apostate man rise to the required sublimity of obedience, and from the summit of an unimpeachable life take wing for the holy heavens? The answer is, Never. "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Note this word "justified." Let me suppose that man could perfectly fulfil the law from this moment forward; I have then to ask, What is to be done with the life that is past, a life lived in hatred to that law? Granted, though the postulate is a moral impossibility, that from this instant man could pay "the uttermost farthing"; I demand who is to pay the accumulated arrears? Man can never do more than is right. He has no power to produce surplus virtue; so that, even granting, for the sake of clearness and emphasis, that man could henceforth fulfil the law in its most punctilious requirements, it remains to be explained how he is to atone for a life that has been prostituted to the devil. The Apostle pronounces upon the case with elaboration and authority: "That no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. . . . The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." The law rendered supremely important service to man if it did nothing more than bring him to the consciousness that he was powerless to fulfil requirements so holy. The law showed him the height to which he must ascend, and he trembled, and owned his weak-

ness. "Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid. Yea, we establish the law." "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." The law was not designed to give life. It had but a schoolmaster's work to do. It was preliminary and introductory; "for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." We see, then, that the law was not a final act in the development of the Divine purpose; it was not clothed with resurrectional or regenerative power; it was a link in a chain; it had to train the consciousness of the world to acknowledge its own utter weakness, for "the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." There was an epoch of law; there is now an epoch of faith. Faith is younger than law; hence, "before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed."

As the law was antecedent to faith, so also it stands in perfect contrast; the one being "the ministration of condemnation," the other "the ministration of righteousness." Yet what is meant by asserting that the law was antecedent to the gospel? I mean antecedent merely in the order of open manifestation. The promise that Christ should come into the world takes precedence of all other promises: this is recognised by the Apostle in the argument of his Epistle to the Galatians,—“And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.” The Lamb was slain before the foundation of the world. Far back in the infinite depths of unbeginning being, the atonement was the vital centre of God's moral plan in the re-creation of humanity. Merely, therefore, in the order of public disclosure was the law antecedent to the Gospel. Love is from everlasting, law is but of yesterday; law is for a season, love is for ever; law is a transient flame, love an eternal orb. Sublime beyond full comprehension is the fact that the Gospel is "the ministration of righteousness." Those who exercise repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ are not merely pardoned; that would be much,—infinitely more, indeed, than the law could

ever do,—but they are made righteous ; they are cleansed ; they are sanctified ; they are transformed into the image of God. “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.” Here is a work far beyond the range of law. Law could not enter the heart with purifying power. Law had no blood in its iron hand to apply to the depraved and guilty nature of man. It is impossible that law could forgive ; law only can condemn. You may address the broken law, but will it speak to you ? Will mercy ooze out of the iron letters in which it stands forth before your streaming eyes ? Never ! You must appeal from the law to the Lawgiver. Only a heart can forgive ; therefore “what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son (his own infinite heart) in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” Here is the moral contrast in all its breadth. The law is weak, the Gospel is mighty ; the law touches the outer man, the Gospel penetrates the heart. “The law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did ; by the which we draw nigh unto God.”

The ministration of righteousness exceeds the ministration of condemnation “in glory.” This is in strict harmony with God’s general method of government. He never goes from the greater to the less, but ever from the less to the greater : “He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.” We thought nothing could exceed the splendour of Sinai, yet it was eclipsed by the transcendent magnificence of Calvary. We were amazed at the eminence of Moses, and the raidance of his transfigured face ; but “we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” We felt that human nature was honoured when Moses was called a “servant ;” but “beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be.” When the law was announced, the people exclaimed in consternation, “Let not God speak to us any more, lest we die.” But Jesus Christ hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel ; he hath “come that we might have life, and that we might have

it more abundantly." The law was veiled under types and shadows; but the Son of God has been crucified before our eyes, and we are crucified with Christ: nevertheless we live; yet not we, but Christ liveth in us: and the life which we now live in the flesh we live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us. Is not the contrast perfect? Is not the glory of the first economy paled by the noontide splendour of the better dispensation? A question of infinite importance arises here. Did the law exceed the Gospel in its condemnation of sin? You know the answer. I speak with trembling reverence in declaring that God could not have shown his infinite hatred of sin so clearly by any method as by giving his only-begotten and well-beloved Son to pour out his soul unto death. When I wish to understand how God regards sin, I do not look at the quaking slopes of Sinai; I do not listen to the thundering or to "the voice of words"; I steal away at midnight across the brook Cedron, and listen to the wail of sorrow that bursts from the breaking heart of the lonely Redeemer; I listen as he pleads for release, and then falls into filial resignation to his Father's will; I watch him up the "dolorous way"; I see him stretched on the accursed tree; I hear his groan, and it makes my heart sore with unutterable grief; I see the gushing blood, the quivering limbs, the languid eye, and hear the voice of despair amid the darkness of premature midnight—and in all this I come to apprehend that sin is the abominable thing that God hateth. The exceeding glory of the Gospel, then, is seen in this,—that while it comes to condemn sin, it also comes to destroy its power, and save those whom it has brought into bondage. The Gospel has no word of pity for sin, or of extenuation for error, but it melts with infinite compassion as it yearns over the sinner. The law never had a loving word for the transgressor—it was stern, inflexible, rigorous; but the Gospel speaks with entreating tenderness to erring man—offers him rest, offers him joy, offers him heaven. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Jesus never temporises with sin; but who ever addressed the sinner in words so full of love, and mercy, and hope? You have never seen him spurn the vilest malefactor from his pierced feet. When such malefactor has gone up to the law, he has been met by thunder and

lightning, and tempest and vengeance ; but when he has crept to the Cross, Jesus has wept over him, and offered him pardon, and peace, and righteousness. Does not, then, the ministration of the Gospel "exceed in glory" the ministration of the law? So greatly does it exceed, that we may exclaim with the Apostle, "Even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth." This method of working fills me not only with wonder, but with hope. It gives me a glimpse of what shall go forward during unending time. No more, indeed, shall there be need to interpose on account of sin ; no hill in heaven shall be surmounted with the Cross on which shall be outstretched an atoning Saviour ; no more sin, no more sorrow, no more sacrifice ; but still ever-expanding and ever brightening revelations of the Divine character ; our knowledge shall increase, our love shall deepen, our strength shall strengthen, and heaven itself will be the last but inexhaustible expression of "the ministration of righteousness." We do well to think of heaven in this light. But for "the ministration of righteousness," heaven would have been inaccessible to man. The Cross opened heaven on the side which darkened towards the earth. The Christian, therefore, does not cease his connection with the Cross when he waves the signal of triumph over the last enemy. The ministration of righteousness does not terminate at the grave ; it stretches across the troubled river of death ; and when the believer enters heaven he instantly joins the song of honour, and power, and blessing, to "the Lamb that was slain." When he reaches that city of rest, beholds the indescribable Majesty, stands face to face with his Lord, whom he has loved and served, he will know all that is meant by the exceeding glory of the ministration of righteousness.

Some are endeavouring to reach heaven through obedience to the law. Are you wiser than God? Is the atonement a mistake? "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law ; ye are fallen from grace." "If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?" Can the law



“purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” Go to the law, as given to Moses, examine yourselves by it word by word, and say whether every requirement has been fulfilled; and if the letter has been fulfilled, go deeper, and see how far the spirit has been apprehended and realised. Have you loved the Lord your God with all your heart, and soul, and mind, and strength? and enclosed your neighbour in the folds of an all-loving philanthropy? What is the answer which conscience forces upon you? The blush of guilt is on your cheek; the fire of self-condemnation is kindled within you. Do not attempt to scale the sides of Sinai; there is nothing there for guilty man but “condemnation” and “death.” Climb the hill on which the Saviour bleeds. Tell Jesus that you have broken the law; tell him how guilty and weak you are; ask him to pity and save your soul; and he will surely take you up into his infinite heart!

As man passes from one “ministration” to another, and so is brought nearer and nearer to God, we should remind ourselves that the advancing ages multiply our responsibilities. We cannot live under the “exceeding glory” without incurring proportionate obligations. It is more awful to live now than to have lived in the opening youth of the world. To-day is the mighty sum of all yesterdays! He who lives in the nineteenth century has nineteen centuries’ experience and history as his dowry. The developments of Divine purpose have a practical bearing on every man’s destiny. We are not permitted to trifle with the dignity of the epoch under which we live. Man’s privileges affect man’s judgment. A birthday is taken into account in the judicial examination of human history. According to the breadth of light which shone upon our span of life, shall be the rigour of the judgment by which we shall be judged: “for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven.” These words make me tremble. So many of us have lived a life of frailest infancy, instead of vigorous manhood. We have lived as though God had done nothing for us, forgetting that he hath come in our likeness, and suffered in our stead! Need more be said to penetrate us with horror, and awaken us to duty?



## PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we are still in thy keeping. Thou dost love us with an unchanging love; we are not thine to-day, and our own to-morrow, we are always thine; for thou didst make us, and not we ourselves; thou hast redeemed us, not with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ thy Son. Thou wilt not forsake the work of thine own hands; thou dost watch us with love, thou dost redeem us with love, thou dost surround us with love: so now we know and say, God is love, and in his love we live, and die, and rise again, and abide through all duration. All thy ways concerning us are full of mercy; it is hard to see the judgment, because the compassion is so great; if now and then we see nothing but darkness, it is that we may be surprised by a great glory; we will not surrender our faith in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thou art our portion, yesterday, to-day, and for ever; we cannot be forsaken whilst thou art with us; the clouds are but veiling an intolerable splendour, and the winds that blow from heaven bring with them the fragrance of the better land. How wondrously hast thou opened for us the gate that was locked; how in a moment hast thou levelled the mountain that was high; and how suddenly have the rough places become plain. Thus we have seen thee in our own life, thus is thy name written upon our whole consciousness and observation and experience; so now we can be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might; we are no longer children tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine; we stand upon eternal verities, we are sure that the rock beneath us can never be moved; here we may build for eternity, for an eternal security is ours. We bless thee for the new visions of life which we see day by day; we are a wonder unto ourselves, we marvel that we carry within us so great a mystery as life, a perpetual surprise, a daily miracle. May we know ourselves to be the Temple of the Holy Ghost; may we no longer trifle with ourselves as the creatures of a moment; may we rather look upon our humanity as redeemed by the blood of Jesus, sanctified by the Spirit of the living God, and made meet to partake of the inheritance that is above. Now we can bless thee for our tears; at the time we shed them they were hot and bitter, they were full of burning; but now we see how good thou wert in bringing us to drink of sorrow, and to bow down in humiliation before thee; now we bless thee for our estate in the cemetery; we thank thee on behalf of those who having left us are still with us, whose graves grow the brightest flowers to be found in all the lap of the summer, whose memory is a perpetual inspiration, whose example is often a gentle rebuke, but more frequently a noble encouragement: for the enthroned and crowned ones we bless the Cross of the Risen Christ. We commend one another to thee; for such

commendation we always need : some are old and weary, some are troubled sorely with the anxieties of a life they cannot measure or control ; others are in constant fear, so that they eat their bread with difficulty and drink their water with pain ; others are needlessly anxious, but they cannot turn aside the threatening shadow ; thou knowest their frame, thou understandest their constitution, thou didst make them and not they themselves. According to our need and pain, our joy and sorrow, our opportunity, our conflict, our triumph, order thy blessing to rest upon us, for without that blessing there can be no beauty, no strength, no duration of gladness. Visit our sick ones : they are sick unto death, they long to die ; the bitterness of death with them is past, and they long for the last command, that they may join the free and happy in heaven. Upon the whole world let thy smile rest ; upon all mankind let some token for good abide ; make all ministers of thine strong in truth, tender in grace and love, rich in human sympathy ; stir thy Churches as with Pentecostal blessing and inspiration ; and upon all efforts made for the dispersion of darkness, and the displacement of ignorance, let thy blessing come down like a plentiful rain : thus may thy kingdom come, and thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven. Amen.

## 2 Corinthians iv. 18.

“Things which are . . . temporal . . . things which are . . . eternal.”

### THE CHANGEABLE AND THE UNCHANGEABLE.

**H**AVE we in our experiences, apart from the religious life, any knowledge of such a distinction ? Is it real, or is it fanciful ? Is the distinction found in law, in institutions ? Is it within the lines of the Church itself ? Are all things temporal ? are all things eternal ? Or is there a specific difference between the one and the other ? If we find the distinction in our daily life, without regard to Bible or Church or altar, we may be prepared to affirm it in all the higher ranges of spiritual speculation and outlook. What if society itself could not exist but for the distinction found in the text between things temporal and things eternal ? It will be like the Bible, if it get hold of us in this way, saying that without knowing it—nay, sometimes in the very act of denying it—we are adopting its very philosophy. The Bible waits patiently until men have had opportunity of accumulating sufficient experience to justify them in constituting it into a basis of reasoning and inference ; then it stands up before them quite suddenly, and says, How is it that ye do not understand ? I have been waiting here all this time, I could have told you all this from the very beginning, but you would

not have heeded my voice ; so now you return from your own experiences and confirm what I was sent to declare : come now, let us reason together ; if you have proved me upon the earth, I may be able to carry you to heaven ; complete your own logic, and let us see whether there be not a line of permanence in an atmosphere of fickleness, an eternal quantity not to be moved or modified by the clouds which roll around it. We may begin at any point.

For example, here is a written creed drawn up by the finest genius of the Christian Church. Still, it is a human composition. Every line bears traces of critical and most pious care, but at the same time the whole was done as the result of human counsel and human co-operation. How shall we place this creed ? We may instantly place it among things which are temporal,—not therefore useless or without value ; with very great utility and very great value attached, but still amongst things which are temporal. A creed is a kind of telescope through which men look upon the distant and the otherwise invisible ; a most useful instrument, but it is not the heavens which it reveals. The telescope is not the star ; the distance between the lens and the planet is a distance of infinity. What then is it which is by its nature opposed to this thing which is temporal, and is therefore to be reckoned amongst things eternal ? The answer is Faith. The difference between a creed and faith is the difference between things which are temporal and things which are eternal. Faith is not a human creation, a human contrivance, to be tampered with by human genius and skill : faith is of God, faith is heaven-born ; it is the crown of manhood, it is the perfection of life, it is the up-gathering, the focalising, and glorifying, of all the highest and purest elements of manhood. Where shall we put faith ! Amongst things which are eternal. The creed will vary,—faith will abide. One creed cometh and disappareth after another, but faith abideth for ever. There may be a creed without faith, but there cannot be faith without a creed : but faith holds the creed for convenience' sake, saying, I will use you thus to-day ; to-morrow I will take you down and reconstruct you, because language advances, science is coming quickly up, new thoughts demand new expressions. The thing that never changes

is the spirit of trust, the spirit of faith. Or, we may begin institutionally, and then the matter will stand thus :—a benevolent institution, founded for the relief of the sick and helpless, is to be ranked with things which are temporal : it is man-made and man-directed ; it was created for the purpose of meeting a particular set of circumstances ; so long as it can meet those circumstances it vindicates its right to be and to work ; it is thus a living institution in immediate and helpful sympathy with human hearts ; still, it is to be put in the category of things which are temporal : what is the quantity which is immediately opposed and which abides for ever ? Its name is Philanthropy,—love of man. That never changes. Philanthropy handles all the institutions, audits their accounts, revises their methods, reconstructs them when it pleases ; says, This institution is not fit to live,—or, This institution has outlived itself,—or, There is need for some larger method and instrumentality than this, and therefore all these institutional appointments must be revised and redistributed and revitalised. Philanthropy never changes ; love of man is part of the very being of God. When the institution is greater than the philanthropy, then you have all manner of mismanagement and mischief and disaster ; then you have a man who is addicted to selfish policy and purpose ; but when the philanthropy is larger than the institution and uses the institution for beneficent purposes, you have fresh air, morning dew, morning light, reality of feeling and reality of sacrifice.

So then, in these matters we make a palpable distinction between things which are temporal and things which are eternal. We may come nearer to the core of the Church still, and put the matter illustratively thus. Denominationalism is to be ranked with things which are temporal. One man says, I am of Episcopalianism,—another, I am of Presbyterianism,—another, I am of Congregationalism. So be it ; that is right ; all that, indeed, expresses a psychological mystery ; we must have diversity of opinion, and therefore diversity of relation. What is the quantity which is set in direct opposition as being permanent, yea everlasting ? Its name is Worship,—religious homage, religious loyalty, praise of God, and consecration to his service. Denominationalism, like all our little systems, has its day ; it

serves a most useful purpose ; it is not to be held in contempt, unless it bring itself into contempt by misuse, and unwisdom, and unreasonableness, but as a thing considered by itself for momentary uses and convenience, it is of high value. But worship endures ; sometimes so sublime as to be silent ; sometimes so joyous as to be almost ecstatic : always so reverent as to be courageous. Denominationalism you may assign to the list of things which are temporal,—worship you must assign to the list of things which are eternal. So long as the worship is superior to the denominationalism all will be well, but when denominationalism is exaggerated, thrust out of its place, it may quench the spirit of worship and issue in angry controversy, wordy frays, misapprehensions of one another, and all manner of mischief and evil.

We may apply the same principle to a religious institution. Let us say the Sabbath. Some say that the Sabbath should be on Saturday, and some that it should be on Sunday. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. The mere day must be set amongst things which are temporal : whether it begin at the cock-crowing or at the dawn, or the evening before, and be stretched over until the evening following,—all these are matters of calculation and opinion, upon which the widest liberty of judgment may be permitted. What is it that is eternal ? Rest. You can appoint the day if you please to be Saturday, to be Creation day, or Resurrection Day, or Pentecostal Day, but the thing you cannot trifle with is God's gift, God's command of rest. Blessed, gentle Father, thou dost see about us having rest : men may quibble as to when it is to take place, they may make a chronometric question of it, as to whether it shall begin at seven o'clock in the evening or at seven o'clock in the morning, but, Father of us all, thou wilt see to it that thy command shall stand, and that all thy creatures shall have rest ; or if they will not have it, it shall be at the expense of loyalty to thy throne, it shall be at the cost of violation of the most sacred things of heaven. With perfect reverence we may apply the principle to the Bible itself. Looking at the Bible externally, it is a book which men made : they made the paper, they cast the type, they manufactured the ink, various men wrote the book at various times :



it is a gathering up of things from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, from old times and from nearer years ; some of the writers never read what the other writers wrote, or had any opportunity of doing so. The Bible, therefore, considered as a book, a manufacture, must be ranked amongst things which are temporal : it has its human aspects, it was written by human hands, it expresses human individuality of religious genius and religious power, and by so much it is to be reckoned amongst things which are temporal. Then what is it that is eternal ? The answer is : the thing which is eternal is Revelation,—the contact of the Divine mind with the human mind, the specific communication from heaven of heaven's high purpose ; a revelation of the nature of God, the economy of providence, the whole scheme of life, with all its mystery of sin, and all its sublimer mystery of atonement. You may redistribute the authorship of the book ; you may say Moses wrote none of it or wrote much of it, or could not have written this or that portion of it ; you may say that the books of the Bible might be rearranged with advantage chronologically—that this prophet should not be first, but that ; that some of the minor prophets should be at the beginning of the book ;—in all this region the greatest liberty of judgment must be permitted : but the thing which abides is that God has at sundry times, and in divers manners, spoken unto the fathers by the Spirit, and has in later times spoken unto men by his Son : God has not left the world without illumination, without spiritual instruction, without spiritual inspiration ; the Word of the Lord endureth for ever,—criticism comes and goes, enlarges, dwindles, corrects itself ; but revelation, as indicating a certain communication between heaven and earth, abides, and must be assigned to the list of things which are eternal.

A number of illustrations will occur on the suggestion of these ; the whole system of things instantly yields as a lock to the right key ; we see all life partitioned into things which are temporal and things which are eternal. These illustrations supply the preacher with an application of the most healthful and pungent quality. Let us see if this be not so. In the fields of controversy we should assent to things eternal. What does controversy inter-



meddle with? With things that are temporal. Controversy takes up little subjects, minute points; displays its shrewdness and cleverness in the detection of flaws or discrepancies in human economies. What talent has been lavished upon church economies, denominational differences, politics of this kind and of that kind, and in the midst of this controversy it may be that the eternal thing has been neglected. The motto quoted from the great bishop is right:—"In things essential, unity; in things doubtful, liberty; in all things, charity." What a ground of union we have discovered now in things which are eternal! Who does not in all the Christian Church believe in the necessity of faith, worship, philanthropy, revelation? Yet who has not allowed himself to be driven off into adjacent lines, that he might fight angry battles about unimportant things? When denominationalism is properly understood, and is pervaded by the right worship, it will be found that denominationalism does not represent the pettiness of a difference but the vastness of a subject. If religion were less, denominationalism would be less. It is because the subject is infinite that the variety is immeasurable. But if we dwell upon the variety and forget the infinity, then we busy ourselves with things which are temporal to the neglect of things which are eternal. Then in religious inquiry we should assent to things which are eternal. There are those who say, There are so many denominations that we do not know which to choose. There the inquirer betrays a frivolous state of mind. You have nothing to do with the multitudes of denominations: if you are in earnest, you want to be saved, to be reconciled to God, to be at peace with the great laws of creation; you want to be a child of the most High. Fix your mind upon that line. You have nothing to do with squabbles and differences, and with rearrangements and varieties of forms of religion: your cry is—I would see Jesus!—and the more the people outside are talking about other things, the clearer should be the ring of your voice, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Keep to your point. You are in quest of things which are eternal, and when you say you have been inquiring of this church and of that church, and have been going from this pulpit to that pulpit, you betray frivolity of mind, not earnestness of soul. Thou whited sepulchre! If we were in

earnest about things eternal they would be shown to us; if we closeted ourselves with God he would show us the way, the truth, the life; then would come minor questions as to attachment to this particular denomination or that, but the great question must be settled between the soul and God himself, saying, Father, I know thee through thy Son. I seek to meet thee at his Cross. There is no difference there. Do not plead the differences of other men as an excuse for your own irreligion; do not live a lie, saying, by suggestion, What an excellent man I would be if other people could only settle their differences: if I go to hell it will be because clever men in the Church cannot adjust their politics and reach a unanimous conclusion. That I must for one never permit: I cannot have your condemnation charged upon the differences of other men regarding things which are temporal. All the men you talk about are one at the Cross, are one in prayer, are one in trusting to the living Christ for redemption, forgiveness, and purity. Let us have no shuffling upon this matter—that you would be such patterns of excellence if other people would but settle their ecclesiastical or theological differences.

In coming to God in prayer, we should fix the mind upon things which are eternal, and regulate our prayer by their wide sweep. We are not to ask for things which are temporal, with any desire to insist upon them. We may mention them, we may say we want fine weather, means to live upon, restored health, and a happy and prosperous voyage over life's uncertain waters; but when we have done all that we must remember that we have been praying about things which are temporal and of no consequence whatever. It is of no consequence whether you die in the workhouse, or die in a king's palace; it is of no consequence whether you live a life of daily pain and disease, or whether you never have a headache to the rest of your days: all that is trifling with God; it may be referred to, it may be regarded as an expression of poor human weakness and selfishness: the thing to ask for is acquiescence in the Divine will: there you pray for things which are eternal, there prayer will be answered. Your fine days for your harvest, or for your holiday even, your prayer that your health may be good, and that your

course may be prosperous are things which might be treated with some degree of contempt when unduly expressed, when impiously exaggerated; but when you say, "Father, thy will be done," you stand upon an eternal rock: when you say, "Come fair weather, come foul, but let me live in thee," no man can take your crown, and no enemy can defeat your prayer. The controversy about prayer is all about things which are temporal,—setting tests for God, building competitive hospitals, making mechanical arrangements for the entrapping of the Divine Being: but when you come to sum up all your prayers in the Lord's Prayer—namely, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done"—your heart must tell you whether your prayer is answered. The very men who deny things eternal, actually recognise them and make factors of them in things temporal. This is the grievous inconsistency! The agnostic has his things eternal; the atheist distinguishes between things which are temporal and things which are eternal. Let me repeat an opening sentence here, which was given in the form of an inquiry, that society itself could not exist but for this vital distinction. What of the State? We have a saying that the king never dies. Why make any arrangements for next year—for the next decade of years? We are all dying—we may be all dead to-morrow. That is true individually. But the State lives. Why should we trouble ourselves about any question that covers a space of twenty-four hours, when our breath is in our nostrils and we may be taken away before we have signed the agreement? Yet, though we are perfectly conscious that we only hold our breath for a moment, all our greater arrangements involve and assume permanence, which on its own level may be regarded as symbolic of eternity. And without this eternity the present would not be worth living. Men die, but Man lives. The teacher dies, but the lesson goes on. One generation cometh, and another generation goeth, but the word of the Lord abideth for ever. Thus, in our political economies, in our state constructions, in all these matters, we have things which are temporal and things which are eternal, the one individual being always a thing temporal, but the sum-total humanity being the thing eternal. What of our family arrangements? Why make a will? Why assign any property? Why mortgage by antici-

pation any future day? We may all die to-day. Whilst all that is assented to, yet the most brazen-foreheaded atheist makes a will, saying in the very act of doing so, There are things, which are temporal, and I am one of them; if I were a thing eternal I would not need to make a will at all; it is because I am a thing temporal that I am making my last will and testament. But who is to get your property? Those who are coming on. Coming on! Yes: man is eternal. So would the atheist talk. It is enough for Christian purposes that this distinction in some form, under some modification, in some way or other, is recognised through and through civilisation. Is the Christian preacher, then, to be deterred if his soul within him says, Press the people that they make things which are eternal their chief concern? Is he a lunatic, a fanatic, an unwise man, when he says, By so much as you care about things which are temporal, increase your care concerning things which are eternal? The temporal is but symbolic: if you are careful about it, you ought by that very fact to be proportionately careful about things eternal. It seems to me that the Christian preacher occupying this ground touches the very summit and crown of reason, and has within his power an instrument which he might use, and ought to use, for the good of his fellow-creatures.

Oh men, men, men: hear the word of the Lord. Do not busy yourselves so exclusively with all things which are temporal as to let pass by in neglect things which are eternal. Acquaint now thyself with God, and be at peace with him. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all things shall be added unto you. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal"—flickering for a moment, fluttering in a dying spasm—"but the things which are not seen are eternal"—calm with the peace of God, guaranteed by the very duration of his Throne.

## 2 Corinthians v.

### SUSTAINING TRUTHS.

**W**E need truths that can sustain us. Appearances are deceitful. Even in our most poetic moods, life is a struggle, a trial, a tragedy: even when we are in health we are not always just as well as we should like to be. There is a worm at the root of the flower: things do not fall squarely into place: we find in all the action of life a creaking and straining and groaning: nothing is harmonically complete. If that man were in another place the figure would be almost perfect, but he is not in another place; if that enemy were dead, we could carry on life to an easy and early victory, but he is not dead. We have to calculate with so much that is unseen and immeasurable, ghostly, imponderable, inevitable. Nothing can be handled altogether. We sow seed, and nothing comes of it; we have had all our ploughing to do over again, and the very earth seems to have conspired against us; it does not like the plough, it will not answer its well-intended rip. The very air is hostile at times; it is full of blackness, blight, coldness, mocking death. The child is ill; the bank is broken; trade is going down; those upon whom we leaned most squarely are getting tired of the pressure. This is one aspect of life. We tell the truth, and no man believes it; we persuade men to their salvation, and they mock us as though we were alluring them to their destruction: we mourn, and they do not lament; we pipe, and they do not dance; and all things are upside down. A man goes forth to do good, and he is treated as a felon; a Man, by the election and decree of God, is revealed to us as the Son of Man, and we give him five mortal wounds, and we shall know him for ever and ever by the scars we have made upon him. This is life in some of its multiplex aspects. What is to be done? Is there any bread? Is there any solid food?

Is there any nourishment for the soul? The old Puritans in reading these verses written by the hand of Paul called these comforts "sweetmeats." It was after the Puritanic fashion, not without quaint beauty, and much suggestiveness. But in very deed they are not sweetmeats, these are solid foods, this is none other than spring water, and this is none other than a banquet spread by the hands of God, of which if a man eat he shall kill lions, he shall lay his hand upon the cockatrice' den, and he shall know pain, fatigue, defeat no more.

What was it that sustained Paul—"in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings"? What kept him up? That is the penetrating and ennobling inquiry. There is not too much detail in Paul's statement:—troubled, perplexed, persecuted, cast down; afflictions, necessities, distresses, stripes, imprisonments, tumults, labours, watchings, fastings. There are times when men find some degree of mournful satisfaction in going into the detail of their trouble—"it soothes poor misery hearkening to her tale." There is a system of spiritual evaporation, by which if a man shall submit his trouble to the pure noonday sunlight, the very action of the sun will cause a diminution in the trouble. It is easy for those who read the troubles of another man to say, He ought to have been more condensed in style. He was condensed enough in style; no man could put so much into a sentence as Paul: but when a man is subjected to the kind of discipline which fell to the lot of the Apostle, he is not magnifying himself but magnifying the Cross, as we shall see, when he details in painful minuteness all the sorrows which constituted his daily burden. If Paul had drawn up a mere catalogue of his own sufferings he would have been the victim of a species of egotism: we shall see that he only builds up the pillar of his endurances that he may make it burn with the glory of his Lord.

What comforted Paul under all these distresses? First of all he said, This is not all: if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, it matters nothing; in fact the sooner it is dissolved the better for us; it will be the opening of a prison-door,



it will be the liberation from a painful school, we shall get home sooner. "We have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Paul was a tent-maker; he takes his image from his tent-making—"If our earthly house of this tabernacle"—if this framework, this mere outline of a house be broken up, we shall not be left houseless, we have more houses than one; this is only the outside hut, this is the little place we commence in, this is the shell that encrusts us; when it falls off we shalt get our wings, all our faculties, and we shall fly away into the country of the sun. "If in this life only we have hope," said Paul, "we are of all men most miserable"; if you measure things by what can be seen and handled, then the Christian has nothing to say; he has chosen the Christ, he has chosen the economy of self-denial that shall end in self-obliteration. He will not take the wine as it is going, and there will be no wine to drink in the darkness into which he is about to fall. If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men the most disappointed; we have made a fatal miscalculation; we are not taking things in their real meaning, and devoting them to their real use; we are fools; we might have snatched something; when a weak man was putting the goblet to his lips we might have taken it from him and swallowed its contents ourselves; but, fool-like, we let him drain the goblet; we simply fall down dead, and have no home to go to, and no God to welcome us, and no King to say, Well done! exchange mortality for life. But, Paul said, "our conversation," literally, our citizenship, "is in heaven." Paul had only one foot upon the earth; all the rest of him was among the angels. He sustained himself in God.

The next sustaining thought that Paul received and lived upon was that what he already possessed was but an earnest, called in the fifth verse, "the earnest of the Spirit." What is the "earnest?" The first money, the money that means the promise. In the country fair the servant hires himself; so long as it is a mere word between two parties it amounts to nothing, but let an earnest pass, one little shilling, and the bond is sealed. That shilling means all the rest; holding that, you hold a bond that the law will not allow to be broken. So the Christian has the first money; that is to say, the first thought, the first comfort, the

first pledge ; and having the earnest he has the harvest ; the first ear, nay the first blade that comes up above the ground, means the whole cornfield. There is no little blade that stands alone and says, I am the only thing you can see ; if you do not take me, there is nothing else to take. No, the solar system never grew just simply one blade and no more ; wherever there is a blade there is a harvest. Why not accept the teaching of this simple and tender thought, and live upon it ? Have you any comfort, any noble impulse, any real consolation, any hold, how feeble soever upon spiritual things, eternal realities ? That is enough ; that is the earnest ; the rest will come ; meanwhile be faithful, be true, be simple-hearted, be frank-minded, be generous, be as Christ ; for that one experience of joy means all heaven ; heaven is nothing but that emotion made infinite. An earnest is a most important fact. The earnest once accepted cannot be thrown back again, without breaking law and bond and honour. Why not see the inner poetry and feel the higher music of things ? Do not be felons in God's great house, the world ; taking earnest as if they had no further obligations and meanings attached to them ; simply living upon your capital when you might say, As long as I have this impulse, this thought, this power of prayer, this faculty of vision, I hold heaven ; my proof is in the earnest. An earnest is more than the firstfruits ; an earnest is a pledge that the other and remaining larger sum will accrue and be realised if the proper service is willingly rendered. Is there a man who can stand up and say that he is a naked pauper in God's universe ? Not one. There are little hedge flowers, as well as garden floral pets ; there are wild flowers as well as cultivated. You may have one little half-blade of grass ; you could not take that out of a meadow which may be fenced and bounded and owned by somebody ; such earnest grow in the open turnpike. There is no simply naked, absolutely destitute pauper in all God's universe. Is there ever a tear of pity in your eye ? That is an earnest ; that means all the love of God. Is there ever a noble impulse in your thoughts ? Do you ever say, even under the pinch of poverty and the clutch of crime, Yes, I will be better ? That is prayer, the battle is won ; it is no longer a fight, it is a victory. We cannot follow the earnest to its consummation :—"Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard

neither hath entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath prepared for them that love him." Yea, and though they are revealed to us by his Spirit, yet the Spirit never can reveal its whole self to us, any more than that the Atlantic can pour itself into a child's thimble; it is a revelation that astounds or encourages or enlarges the soul; it is not a revelation in the sense of telling all that can be told; what ear of man can hold all the music of creation?

"Wherefore we labour, that, whether present, or absent, we may be accepted of him." That was the one grand purpose for which Paul lived, and that was his third sustaining thought. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ": literally, we must all be made manifest before the presence of Christ: every garment must be stripped off, every fold must be laid aside, every motive must be exposed; the whole soul must show itself to God's noonday sun. That is a terror, and yet, on the other hand, it is a comfort. Many are first who shall be last, and many are last who shall be first, and many a great giver shall be proved to have given nothing, and many who have given out of their poverty shall hardly find throne enough in heaven worthy of the excellence which Christ shall impute to them. All-constraining love was the motive by which Paul accounted for his heroic patience, endurance, and sanctified suffering:—"The love of Christ constraineth us." You may take this passage in either of two ways: either Christ's love for us, or our love for Christ; and they both come to the same thing in the end. When we think of Christ's love for us we say,—

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all!"

And then, when we are under the influence of true love towards Christ, we account all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. We are impatient with all bribes and lures; yea, we scorn them with the sneering of the soul, when they are offered as temptations to abide in the world or play into the hands of the devil.

Besides all these thoughts, Paul refers to a new spiritual sense.

He says, "We walk by faith, not by sight." Literally, we do not walk according to the appearance. "Sight" does not here mean the act of seeing; sight means the thing that is seen, the appearance, the shape; so that the godly man who is under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost says, That is a lie: That is a sophism; or, That is a snare: or, That is a temptation: the real meaning of things is behind them: take care that words do not muzzle your thoughts; let your words rather endeavour to express your thoughts. There is a way that seemeth good unto a man, and even right, and the end thereof is death. Paul says: We do not walk according to appearances, according to "phenomena," according to things that can be seen with the eyes and handled with the hands: we have had enough of these lies: all such walking ends in darkness, if there be not another light and another faculty. Any man can wear out his body. You can make yourself blind by looking too much. You can be so grubbing amongst insects and specimens, flies and butterflies, and things that are picked up in out-of-the-way places, that at last no spectacles on earth will suit you. You should have looked otherwise. You might have looked for a few insects, and boxed them and classified them if you liked, but you lived for them. What have you got at the end? You are only yourself pinned into another case as a larger insect than any of the rest. But these men are called very scientific. It comes to nothing, if there be not above it another faculty, another power; then all other under-searching may be made most useful, contributive to what may amount to a revelation. We are dealing only now with those who are the victims of what they call phenomena. And yet no wonder they delight themselves; for, if you will read the life of Charles Darwin, you will be perfectly amazed at the names which innocent insects are made to bear. As some one said, he did not wonder at men knowing all about the stars, but wondered how they got to know their names. But certainly, if ever you saw poor little innocent insects maltreated, it would be under the enormous weight of Greek and Latin which they had to bear, without the slightest thought on their own part. You would not know your own garden, if you saw it in type after a real botanist had been in it. You would disown it; you would feel partially insulted, you would feel decidedly complicated,—

to think that you had ever anything to do with all that sort of thing!—a kind of classical profanity! No, not you. But there are men who live in appearances, and men who hold conversations with one another when they have discovered a Latin name with three more syllables in it by which to distinguish a butterfly. Whether we may not live too much in appearances in what are called “phenomena,” which is but another term for appearances, is a very serious question. We should live by faith, by imagination, by the highest poetry or the soul, by that Divine faculty of transubstantiation which makes the very stones memorials of God. There is no harm in searching into under-life, and all life; there is no harm in biology itself: the harm is in limiting knowledge to that which can be seen only with the bodily eye or handled only with the bodily hands. We rather believe with the Apostle that things, as seen, represent things not seen, and that things that are not seen are the real things, and the things that are seen are not realities. Your body is not yourself. Your friend is not dead. His body is in the pit called the grave, but his soul is marching on. “What,” said some one, speaking about the Virgin Mary, “worship a dead woman!” There is no dead woman. It is a fool’s speech. The Virgin is not dead, but liveth. No creature that ever lived, in Christ’s sense of that term, can die. But because the poor framework, so many bones and so much sinew, flesh, and blood has been dissolved, we say, Our friend is dead. The term may be used for mere convenience; but as expressing a Christian thought it is a lie. Our friend was never so much alive as he is to-day, and when men come to see his poor dead flesh shrouded on the bed, say to those who look on, He is not here, he is risen! These were the thoughts that sustained the heroic Paul, and they will stand, and they will nourish the soul, when all the ignorance of impiety is forgotten like a nightmare.

## PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY God, our only confidence is in thee; in ourselves we have no trust, for we have proved ourselves, and know that in us—that is, in our flesh—there is no good thing. But thou wilt accomplish thine own work; we will not interfere with God, or seek to hinder him, or to counsel the omniscient; we will put ourselves into thine hands, saying only, Thy will be done. How thou art to make of us saints in Christ Jesus, we cannot tell; how thou art to work out the miracle of our perfect redemption, we know not: we fall back so much, we are so ignorant, so feeble, so inconstant, we cannot dream how wondrously thou shalt bring on the topstone; but thou wilt surely do so, thy work shall not be surrendered because of want of strength; thou dost not begin except that thou mayest conclude. Inasmuch as thou hast called us thou hast sanctified us: the call is the proof of the redemption; that we are at the altar at all is our confidence and our joy, that we shall ascend, little by little it may be, but with the certainty of thy decree, to all that is meant by heaven. Surely thou hast never forsaken us; we have not had one day's experience of orphanhood; we have always known how near thou art and how good; if for a small moment thou didst seem to have forsaken us, we have lost the painful memory in the everlasting kindness with which thou hast gathered us. We will speak aloud of thy goodness; we shall not be ashamed of the Lord's name; we shall ascribe unto thee honour and power and glory world without end; but, more than this, we shall ascribe to thee the glory of having redeemed us, though our unworthiness is unspeakable. All this thou hast done in thy Son Christ Jesus; without him is not anything done that is done: by him were all things made, and for him and to him shall be their final glory and their eternal praise. Such words thou hast taught us; such thoughts thou hast inspired in our minds; such visions thou hast spread out before our imagination. Enable us to walk according to thy law and commandment: may thy love not be a licence to us but a discipline; may the mercy of the Lord not encourage our presumption, but deepen our humility and our thankfulness! Let the Lord's light be round about us like a blessing and delight. Let the Lord's grace be in our hearts like the warmth of summer. Amen.

### 2 Corinthians vi. 9.

"As unknown, and yet well known."

### LITERARY ALTRUISM.

TO say that these words apply to apostolic life is right. Their whole meaning might be exhausted by quotations from the experience of the Apostle Paul. Then again comes up



the statement kindred to that in the text—although literally exhaustible in the case of Paul, yet every word that is here is fruitful of suggestion regarding larger doctrine and larger application. A very few steps along this line will show us somewhat of its extent and solidity as a line of argument.

In the Scriptures we continually come upon double statements of this kind :—unknown, yet well known ; possible, yet impossible ; absent, yet present ; on earth, yet in heaven ; knowing nothing, yet judging all things. So we are at liberty to apply the words, which in their first meaning were restricted to personal experience, to the illustration of profounder truths and wider doctrines. Do we recall anything that is at once “unknown, and yet well known” ? A moment’s thought may help us to an hour’s reflection. Suppose we suggest future time. That is unknown, yet well known. Futurity is the mystery of life, the Divine presence amongst the hours—here, yet yonder ; near as the next moment, yet far away in the eternities ; a line an hour long, yet a line long as God’s duration. Consider the future well, for they who can get over all its difficulties and mysteries ought to have no difficulty about God. I do not remember at this moment anything within the compass of human thought which so strikingly and vividly represents the mystery of Divine personality as does what we term the future. We live for the future, even whilst we may deny its broader aspects. What is this magnet that draws us on ? Its name is To-morrow. We want to get away from yesterday, but there is a mysterious compulsion acting upon the life at every point : what is the name of that compulsion ? Its name is To-morrow. Who has seen it ? No man. What will it bring to us ? None can tell. Will it be a stormy sea ? It may be, or it may be a harvest field. Will it be bright ? Will it be a joyous meadow crowned with flowers, fragrant with garden memories ? or will it be a deep, black grave that will swallow up our house and all its contents ? No man hath seen To-morrow at any time, any more than any man hath seen God at any time. Yet we cannot deny it, though we have never seen it, we have never lived it, we have no experience of it ; we have a symbol by which we represent it, we acknowledge its inspiration, its mysterious, elevating, animating influence ; but what it is, whence

it comes, what it will bring, in what shape it will accost us, in what tone of voice, how grim its silence, how eloquent its salutation, none can tell. So we say the future is unknown, yet well known. Thus, in detail, for one moment. The farmer speaks of next harvest: will there be a harvest time? No man doubts it. What will it be in yield and in value? None can tell. It is known, yet unknown—known as a broad fact, unknown in all the minuteness of its detail, and the palpitation of its immediate results. Take the grim certainty of death. We now call it a common-place when we say “all men are mortal.” That is undoubted; criticism does not pause to look upon so well-known and common-place a statement; instantly it is acknowledged by every man that he will die: now the altruistic statement. When? how? By what gate will you go out of this little land into the unknown territory? Will you begin to die in the feet or at the head? Will your heart suddenly stop like a hindered pendulum? Will the brain give way? or shall there be some subtle action in the blood that will bring you to the dissolution of death? So we have the known and the unknown. If we are asked what are all the details of death, we say “unknown;” if we are asked about our death, we say “yet well known.”

Is there anything else that combines these marvellous features of being at once unknown, yet well known? Take life. Who knows it? No man. It is as mysterious as God. The man who can accept life ought to have no difficulty in accepting the Triune God. What is life? No man has ever told. Where is it? No man has seen its sanctuary. Take out the pulse that we may look at it. We cannot. What is this marvellous life,—a flash of fire, a look of love, a touch of kinship, a feast of brotherhood, a hatred that would destroy its object, a redemption that would die for its love,—what is it? Unknown, yet well known; only represented by incarnation, as is God himself, only known phenomenally, as is God himself: for it is the living God that palpitates in all this framework called the universe; it lives in God. We find, therefore, that if we leave ground that is purely and distinctively theological, and go down to some lower level, that we do not leave mystery behind us, and enter upon plain ground, easy sailing, where everybody knows everything, and

where there is nothing worth knowing. Go where we may, the spiritual mystery accosts us and asks our homage. We say of the living God—"Whither shall I go from thy presence? If I take the wings of the morning, and flee into the uttermost parts of the earth, behold—O thou silent, radiant, impenetrable Mystery—behold, thou art there; if I ascend into heaven, thy throne is there: if I dive into hell's caverns and fires, behold, thy judgment is there: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee." We have our choice of mysteries: either the mystery which is all light, or the mystery which is nothing but darkness—the mystery which is associated with beneficence, or the mystery which is associated with increasing darkness and increasing torment.

Is there any other illustration open to the the general mind which confirms this altruism, which the Apostle so graphically represented? Take character. What is character? How is it made up? Can you handle it and say, Behold, such is its figure? Can you weigh it in pounds troy, and assign its weight, to the utmost ounce or carat? Can you sell it? Can you walk around it? Can you lay a measuring-line upon it? Have you ever seen it? Only in incarnation, just as you have seen God. You may say concerning a certain man, Behold, a beautiful character! How do you know that? The man is laughing at you, mocking you, plundering you, defying you. What do you know about "a beautiful character"? You say how mild, how modest, how genial, how courteous. How do you know? A child might lay its hand upon some parts of a tiger and say how soft! how deliciously, beautifully gentle and gracious! We know nothing about character. Call no man good until he is dead, and even after death there may come revelations which will "fright the isle from its propriety."

So we come to the great mystery of all—God. He is unknown. We acknowledge it. The Bible says so. Agnosticism is a child of the Church, a worshipper at the altar, and a baptised minister of faith. Call it not an alien, a heathen, an outsider; give it ample place in God's sanctuary, for its ignorance may become an explanation of modesty, silence, reverence,—not its

intellectual ignorance, which is but another aspect of vanity, but its inability to know the infinite, and to grieve in its little dying heart the fulness of eternity. Yet God is well known. We cannot tell how we know him, but we do know him; imagination knows him, the heart knows him, reason feels him near, conscience hushes the whole being into silence, because of a mysterious presence. We know some realities by the power of love not by the power of genius. Sympathy is a wide and beautiful gate, which opens upon the heart's confidence, as well as school learning, academic training, book information, which after all may only be a weight we carry, not a food which we digest and reproduce in sacred strength. So we enlarge the whole sphere of altruistic vision, and come upon such words as "possible, yet impossible." "With God all things are possible," says Jesus Christ, and one of his apostles wrote in an epistle, "it is impossible for God." Both statements are true, and both are needed to complete a statement of the truth. We refer to this now, because it helps us to a most practical point. It is possible for you to pull down your house, brick by brick, stone by stone, and to begin immediately to unroof the family dwelling; you have strength, you cannot procure instruments, all needful aids are at your service; you could in one short day dismantle and destroy your dwelling; yet you could not, you could do nothing of the kind. What hinders you? An invisible power. What is its name? Reason, common-sense, a correct apprehension of justice and righteousness. Then we are under spiritual control, notwithstanding our irreligiousness? Certainly. It is not because the constable is looking at us that we do not tear down the dwelling; it is because, though we have the power, we have not reason on our side; conscience, understanding, justice, all moral elements and considerations, say to us in an inaudible voice, "Thou shalt not," and thus it becomes impossible. It is possible for you not to go to your business any more; you can take ship and go to the uttermost parts of the earth; after leaving your family in the morning you need never return, so far as mere possibility is concerned; you could destroy yourself, you could leap into the river; and yet you could not. What keeps you back? The ghost or spirit of reason, sanity of mind, and justice to those who depend upon you, and a sense of self-respect.

Now we come to answer the great question—Is it not possible for mortals to sin wherever they are? Yes. Is it not possible then for mortals to sin in heaven? Yes; yet impossible—precisely as it is with yourselves in certain relations and aspects of life. You, the most honest man that ever lived, so far as is known, could now put your thievish hand into your neighbour's pocket: and yet you could not. If you find it impossible to do the possible even here, with all the conditions of time and space and flesh and temptation, what is there to hinder the reasoning that, though it be possible for the creature to sin against the Creator, it should one day be impossible, not because of omnipotency, or oppressiveness, but because such is the culture of all that is noblest in the nature that you could not indulge an unholy look or do a questionable deed. Reason from the lower to the higher. "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not," said Christ, "how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" It is because men are not faithful to what they do know that they fail in reaping the largest harvests of Divine grace and love. If men would complete their own reasoning it would be said of the most stubborn doubter, "behold, he prayeth." Yes, possible yet impossible. Character is the real guarantee, a guarantee founded in reason, proved by experience, illustrated by all the discipline of life. As we have now come to understand that it is possible for us to do wrong in certain directions, and yet impossible, so it becomes easy to believe that when this mortal is swallowed up in immortality, when this corruption is clothed with incorruption, when this common body is changed and made like unto Christ's glorious body, then it will be impossible for us to think or feel anything that God himself, cannot regard with complacency. Let us take out this line here, and we shall have no difficulty about it hereafter. Instead of speculating whether it is possible to sin in heaven, let us take care that, by the grace of God, it is impossible for us to sin on earth.

## 2 Corinthians viii. 7.

"See that ye abound in this grace also."

### PAUL ON ALMSGIVING.

WE should read the eighth chapter and the ninth chapter right through; they really concern themselves with one subject. The Apostle Paul wants to carry a point, and it will be an education to us to watch how he does it. There never was a greater man. He had all qualities. In a sense, the Christian or religious mind found its consummation in Paul. It ought to be a lesson to you, young business men, and to you, leaders of society, to watch the Apostle cunningly, quickly, so that no action of his hand shall elude your vision that you may see how this master, this leader, carries his point. He is making the most difficult of all speeches; he is making an appeal for a collection. Few men can do that with any success. It ought to be deeply interesting to you, men of the marketplace, to see how Paul sets himself about this. We know his great intellect, his wonderful command of solemn and magnificent language; we know how he can wrestle with a solemn doctrine and a great problem; but how will he persuade these Corinthian curmudgeons to give him money? They had promised a year ago; for it was not a bad city for promising; other cities have followed suit with some energy; but the money was not forthcoming. Paul says, in effect, You began a year ago to get ready; I know your disposition is perfectly good, but now I think the time has come when you might perhaps complete your purpose, especially as some persons are coming over from Macedonia to whom we have been trumpeting your praises; we have said, What beautiful souls there are at Corinth! how willing to give and how willing to labour! and if it should happen that your collection is not ready when they come, where are we? I do not say, Where are ye? but, Where are we?—you make



us liars ; you bring us under great suspicion ; the Macedonians and others may turn round upon us and say, You boasted of these Corinthians ; by their example you sought to stir our emulation : now where are they ? Paul makes arrangements which the nineteenth century will understand : he proposes that the Corinthians should get ready—listen—“beforehand.” That is the only way to get money for religion if you want it. He says, You had better pay in advance. These are terms that the nineteenth century partially understands. Whenever I observe in London that a new business place is opened upon the “new principle” I find that the “new principle” is to pay for the goods before you have taken them away. I am surprised that that should be a new principle. Let us watch this master-magician.

First of all, he shows what has been done by others, especially by the churches of Macedonia—“How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.” They were, then, a poor people ; their country and the adjacent countries had suffered from three tremendous and most desolating wars. The taxation was intolerable ; the people of Macedonia and Achaia had prayed Tiberius to be released from the government of the senate, and to be placed more immediately under the administration of the Emperor himself, and this was done, that they might in some degree mitigate the pressure of vexatious, harassing, and almost persecuting taxations. These people, so ground down in Græco-Roman citizen provinces, these were the people that astonished the Apostle by their simplicity, here translated “liberality,” their sincerity, their oneness of mind and heart, about the needy people far away. But is it not always so ? Who are the people who adopt children ? Persons who have nine or ten of their own. Who are kindest to the poor ? The poor. Who was that pastor in Brussels long ago, in an age almost romantic now, who, seeing a poor woman in great sorrow and suffering, took down his own bed to her, and himself took away the straw that he might lie upon it ? He was a poor preacher, a poor Christian nobody. So we should call him, but his name is writ large in heaven ; hardly was there gold

enough in all that upper city to make the letters large enough and rich enough with which to build his name on the tablets of the skies. If you propose in a council meeting, composed of wealthy merchants and others, as I have done, not in London, that there should be an offering at every service, these wealthy merchants always say that the poor might feel it, and therefore they think it better that there should not be any arrangement of the kind. The poor never complain. It was the rich merchant who did not want to be troubled,—this he saith not that he cared for the poor, but because to himself, as to all gluttons and self-indulgent persons, it would have been a vexation and a toil. Never will you find any trouble in this direction among the poor. All Christ's trouble is with the rich, greedy man. This had better be said, and better be understood.

This work had been done by men also who had strained themselves—"For to their power I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves." "Beyond their power"—a man can always do something more, not in this particular direction, or that, but in some other direction; and the measure will always receive something more, it is so capacious; and yet we never can give all, and the moment we have done our most God begins to do his most. Who can overtake God? Do you know to whom you owe that great balance at the bank, you four-figured man? What does your "Cr." mean on your books, or your "Dr."? To whom are you indebted, to whom must you give the credit? It will all be taken away from you, beginning at the first figure, unless you realise in a very wise, sensible, and gracious way the Giver of your store. I shall have you at the door begging some day because you were rich and godless. Take care: riches make to themselves wings and flee away. Be on your guard: your wash-leather purse may have holes in it, and the gold may be leaking out. Who are the men who have made history, who have helped human life? The poor, the men who have strained themselves, who have gone beyond their power. Shall they be forgotten in the resurrection of the just? God is not unrighteous to forget their work of faith and labour of love. No man shall give a cup of cold water to a disciple in the name of Christ but

shall receive a hundredfold—all wine, intoxicating the heart, but not poisoning the blood.

It was done by persons, further, who asked to be honoured by being allowed to give—"Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift." We said, Can you do this? and they said, We can. We asked them to consider the whole case, and they said, We have done so. Where have you done it?—On our knees. From what standpoint have you looked upon this case? From the Cross. These are the men that make life beautiful. The heathen had done some things in this way. When Alexander the Great accomplished the conquest of Persia people asked him where the treasure was which he had taken up, and he said, "*In scriniis*,"—that is to say, In my chest, in my box. Being asked where his chests were, he pointed to the poor, "I have given all to the poor"; then, in modern phrase, What has Your Majesty kept for yourself? "*Spem majorum et meliorum*"—hope of greater and better things. That was done by heathen paganism; that was done by a man that we lecture upon as a horrible character in history, from a merely blood-shedding point of view. He made the poor his treasurers; he lived in hope of greater and better things. Who can rival that? Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of all scribes, Pharisees, moralists, financiers, and prudent men, you cannot see the kingdom of heaven. You can see some superstition, you can lay hold upon some religious prejudice, you can build a sect upon some disjointed text; but God's kingdom, all light, you cannot see.

How did they do all this? There must be some profound explanation of this heroic self-denial: how was it accomplished? The Apostle tells us. He says, they "first gave their own selves to the Lord"; then all minor gifts became easy. The great demand of the times is that men should give themselves to the Lord. Until a man has done that, he is toiling up a very steep hill, endeavouring to roll a very heavy stone before him; he can hardly move it, and every step he takes forward, he takes a step back. It is toilsome work to go where the heart has not been given, It is easy work to give where the heart leads. So we

come to the deepest reply. This is no superficial answer. Many persons say, Remember the words of the Apostle Paul, "We seek not yours, but you"; then they think they have put an end to all appeals and made the matter remarkably simple; these are the expositors who ruin the genius of revelation. Consider the case: "We seek not yours, but you," knowing that when we have got you we have got yours. The "you" is inclusive, plural; it means the whole total man, body, soul, and estate. How often is that passage misinterpreted; how foolishly men have sought to weaken Christian appeals by quoting the Apostle, who says, "We seek not yours, but you." Paul had a leading solicitude; Paul was a master-builder; Paul was the chief of accountants. He knew what he was talking about. So long as we seek only "yours" we have to fight for it and argue about it and worry it out of the man; but when we have got the man himself, with all his love, the rest is easy. He who has seen the sun, makes nothing of looking upon a little candle: he who is in heaven looks down upon the earth, not up to it: he who has given his whole soul to Christ gives all that he has as a matter of gracious sequence. Until this is done we can make no progress. Do not say you have given yourselves to Christ, if you are keeping anything back from him. We do not want the things you are so ready to give; we want things you do not want to part with. There are many persons who are perfectly ready to give you any amount of good advice. The beggar appealed to the Cardinal for a penny, the Cardinal gave him his blessing; the beggar returned the blessing, saying, "If it had been worth a penny you would not have given it to me." These beggars can reason! The poor are not necessarily foolish. There is an education which comes of experience as well as an education which comes by intellectual drill. It is impossible for any man to be uneducated to-day; the friction of the time is such that he is bound to be sharpened and stimulated and made sagacious. Do not therefore imagine that we can escape true reasoning and true criticism; do not imagine that you can give your money and keep yourselves back. We do not want such money; no blessing comes with it: only he can give money who has given himself. "Given" is a large word, small in letters, but all-inclusive and all-compendious in utterance. Can a man give

who does not feel it? He may part with the money, but has he given it? Where do we find that word "give"—"God so loved the world, that he gave." He gave; then, if we search into that, we shall find the meaning of the word. What did he give?—"his only begotten Son." Can a man who lives upon the interest of his interest give anything? He never knows the luxury of giving. He may give a tenth of what he has or even a fifth, but it is not giving in any Christian or sacrificial sense; it is being respectable or reputable, it is getting a place upon a glaring list, it is ostentation, but it is not piety. Only he gives who smarts, who feels, who gives out of his poverty, and beyond his poverty. We must cleanse all these abused words. We must not let the vessel of the Lord be used wantonly; these holy words are vessels of the sanctuary: they must not be taken away by felonious hands, nor must they be appropriated by cold hearts. A man who gives a sovereign when he ought to have given a thousand has given nothing. It is not giving; it is eluding, escaping, compromising, defrauding. He gives who gives blood.

The Apostle addresses himself to this critical and arduous task with some ability. Let us watch him once more. "Therefore," saith he, "as ye abound in everything" add this. Some medicines look bad. Paul puts a capsule over the pill that the Corinthians would not like to take. The capsule is not the medicine, but the capsule performs a useful office. Some little children have been persuaded to take medicine, because it was to be taken in treacle. A child will undergo a good deal for that luxury. We remember the days, when the doctor having prescribed that the medicine should be taken in jelly, we thought him wise and kind. How much jelly there is in this verse! "Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us. . . ." Paul would not have a church nine-tenths good, he would have all the ten points: his logic is Therefore, as ye have done so much for your character, do not represent a broken policy; do not put up a pillar and forget the capital. "As ye abound in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence and in your love to us"—a very subtle charm of the Greek tongue in which he wrote and spoke, the image being, as your love flows



out of yourselves and comes upon us as upon its objects, therefore complete your character. Who would build a house, and forget to put the roof on? The rooms are spacious, the lights are towards the south, but there is no roof on the walls. How many roofless characters there are! How many persons there are who have seven points out of the ten! yea, some persons have nine points out of the ten: the Apostle comes to them and says, As you have health and strength and reason and education and good circumstances, now add this also; put in the one thing that is needful. Jesus Christ will not allow a man to escape upon a large balance of character. The young man made but a mouthful of the commandments; he said All these have I kept from my youth up—quite familiar with every one of them; no one of them has any claim against me. Then said the Saviour, One thing thou lackest, add this also: go, sell that which thou hast, and give to the poor, and come. What if for want of the one thing we lose all the other things we have! Suppose a man had a great estate, but had no eyesight; therefore he has no landscape, no poetry, no opening and ever-brightening vision. Suppose a man should have a houseful of little children and be stone deaf, never hearing one of their voices, never hearing his own name, never hearing the prayer of a little child addressed to his own heart. Why, the man had better have his eyesight than have his estate; he had better have his hearing than never to listen to earth's richest, sweetest music. Do not therefore imagine that, if you have nine points out of the ten, the tenth will be regarded as a mere trifle. There are no trifles in character.

Does not the Apostle rest here? No, he advances, he recedes, he pleads like a special pleader; then he goes to the great fountain of motive and draws his impulses from the very centre of the universe. He says "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." You know that. Here, then, is no special pleader but a man who states his case like a merchant, argues it like an advocate of the finest capacity and quality, and seals it with the blood of the Cross.



## 2 Corinthians x. 4.

"The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God."

### WEAPONS OF WARFARE.

THE last idea that occurs to some professing Christians is that Christianity or that Christian life is a warfare. It has been noticed by observing and discerning persons that almost as soon as a man joins the Church he settles down into indifference or personal and selfish enjoyment,—as if a man should enlist into the army, and then go home and sit down all the rest of his days on the sunny side of his house and in the favourite spot in his garden. What kind of enlistment is that? Do you call that a soldierly spirit and a soldierly service? Whenever the idea of soldierliness took hold of Paul's imagination he elaborated the figure with marvellous energy. We know the quality of writers and speakers by the kind of trope and metaphor they most indulge in. When Paul saw a race, a contest, as between runners, he instantly made an analogy about it respecting Christian running and prize-winning, and when the idea of soldierliness occurred to him he showed that he was a born soldier. Whatever he did he did in a soldierly way. If he wrote letters he wrote them with the point of the sword; when he stirred men up out of their laggardness, he said, "Endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ."

In addition to this the next mistake that is made is that persons who enter the Christian service imagine that all the fighting is to be done outside. You cannot fight outside until you have fought inside. The first man you have to kill is yourself. You are too much on the streets; the wonder is that you are alive, considering the number of meetings you attend for the purpose of making other people better. You are walking miracles. Where the long self-communion; where the bath into the love of God; where that self-wrestling that means public conquest? It makes one's heart ache to know how many miles

some people walk who ought to have been at home. The children longed for them, the good wife felt lonely, or *vice versâ*, as the circumstances may be. If you have no home life, no long communion with God and with one another at home, you are not soldiers, you are vagabonds, wanderers, adventurers. No sooner do some men rise in the morning than they must be out. They have had no bath in heaven, they have not been washed with the dew of loftiest, divinest fellowship. Hence they do no work that abides. By doing much they do nothing; they fail through excess of misdirected industry. On the other hand, there are those who spend such long time in silence and communion and abstention from public activity, that we begin to doubt their sincerity, their loyalty to the Cross. Christ was not slain in secret; his Cross is the most public object under heaven; nay, more, it darkens the sun! Poor indeed is the thought, and poorer still the love, that is self-communing, self-expanding, self-considering, that never goes out on the damp, dark, cold night, never searches the mountains for lost ones, never loses a night's rest that some other man may have one. So there must be no recrimination, we must know nothing about reprisals in this case; every man must judge himself and come to his own conclusion, not in the presence of other men, but in the sight of the great white throne of God. There is nothing so subtle as selfishness. Many a man supposes himself to be a philanthropist, who is the most selfish reptile on the face of the whole earth. He can be very philanthropic in public; I ask, How many sick people does he visit? how many blind people does he lead over the thoroughfare and the crowded crossing? when does he open his eyes that he may see opportunities for doing good by stealth? It is possible to be a magnificently grand philanthropist in public, and to let your own family starve for want of sympathy. On the other hand, it is possible for men to be so generous at home as to have no larger charity, not to care about those who are far off and at present unknown; possible for a man to be so pottering about his own little affairs in a little four-cornered house, as to forget that God has made constellations, universes, infinite spaces, and countless myriads multiplied by countless myriads of mankind. It is needful for the Christian teacher to explain these things and to enlarge them,

that men may not run away with false ideas. We see our own side of the case best.

Are we at war ? If the Church is not at war, it is unfaithful to Christ. Was Christ the Prince of Peace ? Truly he was, yet the Prince of Peace, for the very reason that he was the Prince of Peace, never ceased from war. No such soldier ever lived as Christ. Your Hannibals and Alexanders and Cæsars cannot stand before him who came that he might send a sword upon the earth. Christ is against every bad thing : against foul air ; against false weights and measures and balances, against all trickery in trade, all insincerity in social life ; against all show, fashion, glitter, that has not behind it the bullion of eternal truth and everlasting grace. Christ never met evil without smiting it in the face. Dare we show Christ our list of guests when we make a feast ? Did we first submit the guest-list and the toast-list to the Saviour ? Let us show him one of our lists. He reads it, and gives it back to us, saying, And thou, when thou makest a feast, call not the rich and the men that can have thee back again, and rival thy lavish expenditure ; but call the halt and the blind, the poor, the maimed, and the friendless : they cannot recompense thee, but thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the dead. O holy Jesus, gracious Saviour ! thou wast the Friend of the friendless. Such agony of sympathy must die, but must also rise again. In the Cross of Christ the resurrection is the complement of crucifixion.

Supposing the Church to be at war ; has the Church the right instruments or weapons in hand ? I think not. The metal is bad, the forging is faulty, the whole conception of the panoply is vicious. There are many wrong weapons in the Church. There is disputativeness. Some men will haggle over words until they be almost too late for their own burial. They are mere literalists, wordmongers ; splitting hairs, and forgetting the sun, and all its wealth of summer. They could talk controversially at noonday when the sun is at its meridian ; they could talk controversially, especially in a theological way, in walking up and down a garden, when June empties her lap upon the blessed spot. They must dispute, or they will not think themselves Christians. That is a miserable weapon, and never brings home any prey. It is always

associated with love of victory. To call a man by a polysyllable is thought to be a kind of negative conversion of the man; to puzzle him by learned references that have not been verified is a kind of bewilderment, which they look upon as having brought him almost into a right state of mind. Some questions want to legislate men into goodness. Why does not the State take up this matter? Because the State has no right to the use of such weapons. The State is not necessarily a soldier of Christ; the State is a constable, or a stipendiary magistrate, or even a judge in one of the superior courts; but the State, as such, knows nothing about the unwritten law, the everlasting righteousness that can only be discovered by the spirit of righteousness. The State is the lamest creature that ever claimed indentity. The State cannot make people sober, it can only punish them for having been drunk; the State cannot make men honest, the State can only punish men for having been thieves. The work of the State is negative. You cannot have Sunday observed by law. If the people will not rend their hearts, it is in vain that you compel them to rend their garments. If Sabbath be not kept in the soul you cannot have it kept by Act of any reign of any monarch born or unborn.

All this, therefore, points to the necessity of something other. What is that something other? It is the spiritual element, it is the ghostly force. You can only get at men by getting at their souls. You can do little or nothing with their bodies; these you have to keep and clothe and variously preserve and defend, but the men are not yours until you have conquered their souls: and you cannot conquer men's souls by fleshly instruments or weapons, you can only get at souls through something that is of their own quality.

How will Paul, chief of the soldiers of the Cross, deport himself in this war? Hear him:—"Now I Paul myself beseech you." Is that the fighting tone? Yes, in the Church it is the only fighting tone. In other fields, gory and shameful, there is a tone of a totally opposite quality, but you must learn from the true soldiers what the true soldierly tone is; and here is the very chief commanding officer of all, who says, "Now I Paul"—the invincible, the inflexible—"I Paul myself beseech you":

I lie down at your feet and pray you, entreat you, saying with my heart and through my choking voice, Will you? Has he nothing still deeper behind this? He never concealed the fountain of his sympathy or the fountain of his power:—"I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." Is that a soldier's tone? Why, soldiers have trumpets, they have throats of iron, lungs of steel, voices of thunder; simply because they require vulgarity with which to do vulgarity's work. But here are men who want to conquer hearts, souls; and they lie down, beseech, and make their meekness part of their panoply; and their gentleness is the very strength of their sword. Do not suppose that you can whip children into church. You may get them within the four walls, but they are not at church for all that; they are miles and miles away from your church. You must bring them there because they love to be there above every other place in the world, and you must come with them, you must be little children along with them, and if the little children are not tall enough to stand up and share your hymn book, you must sit down with them and give them full half of the page, and go along the lines with your finger, and you must all be little children together. Have you the right spirit? then you must conquer: not to-day, or to-morrow, but on the third day you will come with great prey, which the Lord hath delivered into your hands because you fought in his own spirit.

Then there is the beautiful life. What a sturdy old weapon is that! The mother converts the children without saying much to them. Her patience is an argument; her night-and-day love wins in the issue. Sometimes the sweet old mother does not know how many she has taken in war, unless such intelligence is communicated to sainted ones in the better land. Many a time a man has allowed his mother to die without owning that she had won his soul, without indeed her having done so in fact, until after she was gone; then he thought, How lovely she was; the door was then never shut in his face, the midnight was not filled with the darts of reproach; he did not know what she was until she went away from him; blessings brighten in their flight, and now he says, cursing his ungrateful past, God be



merciful to me a sinner ! I could not understand the theologians, but I can understand that motherly love that I once despised. Has that mother no prey ? Is she not mighty to the pulling down of the strongholds of selfishness and ingratitude and rebellion of heart ? Is there a man amongst us who would not love to have just one more day with his old mother, that he might make up for neglect ? She won through the beautiful life.

Then there must be spiritual conviction and spiritual persuasion, and you must get a hold upon the heart. The pastor who has hold of his people's hearts can never be dethroned. People outside may speak against him, but the answer is, They do not know the man ; if they had seen him as I have seen him in sorrow and trouble and difficulty, if they had heard his prayer at the bedside, they would have been his just as much as I am. Thus Christ wins, not by the blare of battle trumpets and the crash of carnal metal, but by love and tears and tenderness and sympathy and patience, so that he constrains all the great houses of history to say, His mercy endureth for ever. There is a war that is not blazoned in the gazettes of this world. Some men's war they find in regular steady work, but the world does not know such work to be of any real value ; the world loves processions and banners and demonstrations. The world does not know the energy of peace. Let our war, therefore, be according to our capacity and our opportunity. Let us go steadily forward with quiet work, steady giving, constant sympathy, perpetual readiness to do the very next thing that is to be done, though it be of the very simplest character. How foolish is the Church ! Only get up something romantic, and you may command any amount of attention, and any amount of response for the time being. But romance has no deepness of earth, and therefore it soon withers away. When will men be steady workers ? When will they be keepers at home ? When will they find in their own houses a home mission-field ? When will they in their own business quietly shed about them and around them an influence, which will compel men to say, This is not earthly, this is not a matter of calculation ; there is something about this policy that can only be explained by the greatest words in human language,—such as justice, love, pity, God.



## PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, grant unto us thy Holy Spirit, that we may know the meaning of thy word, and that we may obey the same, with all humility, diligence, and thankfulness. May thy word dwell richly in us; may we not know it in the letter only, but in the spirit; not in the part, but in the whole; and may our souls be so filled with the spirit of thy revelation that we shall not live by bread alone, but have meat to eat that the world knoweth not of. Thy word is meat, thy word is drink; may we eat and drink abundantly of thy word that our souls may be satisfied with fatness. Thine is a wonderful word to this intricate, busy, tragic life. We thank thee that thy word touches our life at every point, appeals to every necessity, offers a prize to every holy ambition, and points out to every sorrowing soul the great all-explaining, all-reconciling Beyond. We need all thy word, its doctrine, and counsel, and exhortation, and reproof, and judgment; as we are not always the same, so we need a word that varies its appeals and yet covers the whole necessity of life. May the man of God be thoroughly furnished unto every good work, well equipped, fortified at every point, wise in the whole circle of his mind; lest being wise in many points he be a fool in others, and thus defeat his own life and make his own prayers vacant. We thank thee for all thy goodness to us along the road; we should have seen nothing but for thine illumination; we should have heard nothing that is not of the earth, if thou hadst not touched our ear and caused us to hear music from heaven; the road would have been very long without thee, but with thee we forget the journey; we saw the city at the farther point, and were drawn to it by an ennobling fascination. Thou dost strike down whom thou wilt, and whom thou wilt thou dost spare, and none may say unto thee, What doest thou? for thou wilt not render a reason unto the children of men. We are woebegone, and dumb; we try to say, Thou didst it, and yet our unbelief outruns our prayer. But thou wilt give us time, thou wilt not drive us with great stress of energy, thou wilt not hurl upon us thy great power; thou wilt remember our frame and our origin, and thou wilt spare us, that we may recover our strength and expend that vigour in new praise. Help us to believe that all things are under God's control. They do not seem to be so; there seems to be much standing ground for the unbeliever, and even for the scoffer. Yet give us time, O God, and cut us not down when we are atheistic. In our hearts we believe in thee; our souls are sure of thy goodness; and yet the things that are round about us stagger and bewilder us, and create in our soul tremendous revolt. Help us to be quiet; give unto us the sight that sees most clearly through blinding tears, and help us to

believe that in the end every sorrow will prove to be the root of a new joy. As families we come before the Lord, thanking God for the sacred household, beautiful home, deepest rest, fullest and tenderest trust,—the very gate of heaven: help us to spread this spirit abroad, and being happy ourselves to make other people glad. May no man live unto himself, or keep his wine in his own cup; let the wine of gladness overflow that they who have no cup may catch somewhat of it and thus be made at least momentarily glad. Enlarge our thought, our love, our life, and make us like Christ, pure, saintly, tender, good, beneficent, living always that somebody else may live. Make the old man young with hope; make the strong man modest because his days are measured, and though they be many, yet they may be gone in a moment; and grant unto all the little children, and all the sick and the weary, such messages as they can receive, and may a strange beauteous joy like an unknown but ever-welcome angel come into their hearts and give them some foretaste of heaven. We pity those who pity not themselves,—the ignorant, the out-of-the-way, the rebellious, the far-wandering; we know not how to approach them, they resent even the look of love; we leave them in God's hands; they are the mysteries which tax our faith, they may become contributories to our highest, deepest confidence. The Lord be round about us, in the Church, in the house, in the marketplace, and show us that as our days are dwindling our love should be increasing, and that now there is no time but for union and chivalry and nobleness and Christlikeness: may this spirit be amongst thy children all over the world, and they shall show what is meant by a Church redeemed and inspired. Good Lord, come quite near to those whom no one dare now approach. Thou knowest who are sorrowing in deepest sorrow and trying to sing through their choking emotion; thou knowest who at this moment may need special realisation of thy presence and special confidence in thy sovereignty and love: the Lord come near to such, and interpret new words to them. Thou knowest how to say "Widow" that it shall not be so lonely, and "Orphan" that it shall not be so desolate. Oh, thou who didst give us Jesus and the Christ, thou wilt not withhold from souls that are darkened and burdened the only solace which they can now receive. The Lord hear us at the Cross; the Lord make Calvary to us more precious than ever; the Lord show us that our Christ is not dead; the Lord take us from Calvary to heaven, that there we may hear One saying, I was dead; but I am alive for evermore. Amen.

## 2 Corinthians xi., xii.

### PAUL'S SELF-VINDICATION.

**I**T was difficult for some of the Corinthians to believe that Paul was an apostle. That comes of a man making himself too familiar with his people. Preachers should hardly ever be seen by some people; they cannot understand the mystery of reaction, they do not comprehend all the suggestiveness and blessedness of free, genial, generous intercourse. Some people

can only understand a little of religion when it is written in polysyllables. It would be possible to destroy the faith of some men by destroying their superstition. If their religion were written in modern English they would not know it; because we have instead of "loves," "loveth"; instead of "hears," "heareth"; instead of "understands," "understandeth": it is in these archaic endings of words that many people find what small piety they have. They cannot follow apostolicity itself in its stoopings and condescensions and variations, and in its adaptation of immediate instruments to the accomplishment of the supreme purpose of the Christian ministry. Paul stoops to talk to such people: but even when Paul stoops his attitude is greater than the elevation of other men. In Paul's self-vindication there is no egotism, no vanity, no taint of mere personal conceit; it is heroic individualism, a broad, generous projection of himself from the Cross and towards the Cross: a mysterious action not to be understood in mere letters. It will be interesting to be present when he holds conference with Corinthian doubters.

They assail his apostolicity. He first defends himself by his record of work. Having given an account of his pedigree, he leaves that, and he says,

"Are they ministers of Christ?" [then in a parenthesis—"I speak as a fool")—because I am talking to fools] "I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." (xi. 23, 28.)

Paul's argument is this: Would any man undergo such sufferings and privations but for an impulse that must have come from eternity? Saith he, I will tell you what my wages are:

"Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." (xi. 24-27.)

These wages were regularly paid: nothing was begrudged: the remuneration was handed to him with a lavish generosity.

What else could I be, Paul would continue, than an apostle, to have undergone all this discipline, pain, privation, and 'excommunication from the security and delights of civilised life? That argument will be hard to answer. While he was dealing with his pedigree it seemed as if some man might arise and say, My parents were born a hundred and fifty years before yours: but when he came to his record of work there was great silence in the Church. Suppose that an opportunity were given for a man to outrival this citation of labour, you can imagine the melancholy, suggestive, humiliating pause that would follow a challenge so broad and striking. We never know what this record is until we try to put our own record side by side with it. Would any man know how far he has gone in the direction of religious progress and heavenly attainment? Let him read 2 Cor. xi. 23-28, let him write that record on one side of the page, on the other let him write what he himself has done.

We all suffer from occupying the position of mere critics: It is when we come to attempt the emulous work of rivalry that we find how feeble we are. A man shall sit and criticise an oratorio by Handel; whilst he criticises he seems to know something about the matter: now let him produce a composition of his own and put it into the hands of the musician whom he has criticised. There are those who have disputed the apostolicity and consequent authority of Paul: here is the man's own record. Where is the record of his critics, then, his despisers? No apostolicity is to be tolerated for a moment that is not backed up, certified, and glorified by hard work. Yet the record must go farther, for even hard work is not enough. There are some men magnificent in work, who are contemptible in suffering. Give them enough to do, and they will do it with a strong, steady hand; they like work, they like publicity, they like motion: call upon them to give, to expend, to suffer, to see excisions completed upon patience, strength, property, friendship, and the like, then you see their true quality. We are Christians: how then does our record run? "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one" (xi. 24). What line do we put down in juxtaposition with that? When did we receive forty stripes? That line must be a blank. "Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned,

thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep" (xi. 25). How shall we match that record?—"beaten with rods," that must go; "stoned," that must go; "thrice I suffered shipwreck," that must go; "a night and a day have I been in the deep," that must go. Two blank lines. "In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren" (xi. 26). What perils have we ever been in for Christ's sake? None. Three blank lines. "In weariness and painfulness"—the suffering that has got no words to express it adequately; a sense of depletion, exhaustion, utter nothingness—"in watchings often," till our eyes have been sore with looking, "in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness"—and all for Christ. If Christ were not in a man he could not undergo this discipline. Let the Church be judged by its works. Pay no heed to its articles of belief, regard not its mere ministry in words, do not look even at its works; go beyond and ask whether it has worked up to the point of pain, weariness, feebleness, extremity; ask whether it has suffered for its faith. I should say about any faith that it ought to be revered in the degree in which its devotees have suffered. This is true of the faiths of paganism, of the faiths of twilight thought. Only earnest men can nobly suffer, only souls that are charged with the inspiration of God can accept penalty, infliction, loss, and all manner of evil patiently, uncomplainingly.

But did the Apostle Paul receive his lot in life in a merely negative condition of mind? Did he say, We must not complain: this was promised or predicted, and therefore nothing has happened to us not of the usual course: we cannot murmur against such providences? The Apostle Paul got far beyond that; he wrote a sentence that has in it all the poetry of heroism, he said, "Yea, we exceedingly glory in tribulation also." He did not accept it, he gloried in it; his sufferings were his crown in forecast.

In writing his record Paul does not forget some of the more or less amusing circumstances that occurred in the course of so



varied and tumultuous a life. There are circumstances that do not look amusing at the time, but as the days come and go, such circumstances show the underlying comedy. Paul says, Once through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped from the hands of the governor of the city of the Damascenes (xi. 32-33). What a fall in the nobility of the record! Beaten with rods, stoned, shipwrecked, wearied, pained to agony, watching to blindness, hungered to starvation; and yet this man consented to escape, by getting into a basket and being let down like a load from a window. Paul makes no apology for this; he does not say, I know the contrast is very striking and startling: I ought not to have done it. You cannot tell what you ought to have done. Let us hear what you did in reality. Sometimes we have only a moment in which to think and to decide. Paul, the basket is ready, the window is open, danger is imminent! He does not say, I must take three days to think about what course I shall pursue. The Lord trains us by making extemporaneous demands upon us. He expects us sometimes to answer in a moment. You and I have done many things which we would not do again. I am not aware that Paul ever went anywhere else in a basket, or was let down by the wall, or escaped by the back-door. Yet it was well that he did this. If he had always been on the star-line he would have been out of our way wholly; but he tells us with the frankness of sincerity that he has been as weak as other men, and oftentimes has felt the weariness which is akin to despair.

But he will not rest his authority upon his hard work and his sufferings alone. He says—I will give you the spiritual aspect of my apostolicity, “I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.” There is an outside record, of action, of suffering, an obvious and public record, which everybody can read. We ourselves live a newspaper life. We are paragraphed into momentary publicity. Paul says, I will tell you something that nobody else could tell you, I will take you into my confidence, I will let you see a little of my subjective and most profoundly spiritual experience; I will come now from suffering, loss, and defeat to visions and revelations of the Lord. Now we shall enter into the sanctuary of the soul. Paul would not make these



things public but in vindication of his apostolicity; nor would he vindicate his apostolicity but to acquire the kind of influence which he could most successfully employ in doing good. "I knew a man——." That is cold; that is whipping up recollection to supply an incident; the literal reading would be, "I know a man." There is a good deal of meaning in this change of tense:—I knew a man who has become a memory, a shadow, a thin outline on the horizon of the heaven. We do not want to hear about such outlines, we want to live in the present. Paul therefore said literally in his own grammar, I know a man in Christ: that man is living now, though the incident I am about to relate occurred fourteen years ago: and how it occurred I cannot tell; whether the man was in the body I do not know; whether he was out of the body I do not know. There are times when the body is nothing to us, and has no record in the fight, the rapture, the realised heaven. Blessed are the hours when a man can get rid of his body, the death-doomed flesh. We have had experiences of this happy dis severance, when we have been all soul, free emancipated spirit, and have had masonic entrance through the stars into the very glory of God. We shall come to understand this drag of a body better by-and-by, this cursed flesh. "I knew a man"—I know a man—"in Christ"—the larger man, the truer, completer, tenderer man. The words "in Christ," must not be omitted from the poetry of the expression; the spirituality and divinity of the utterance, you will find in the words "in Christ." God knoweth whether he was in the body or out of the body. We are afraid of rapture, ecstasy, contemplation, that kind of spiritual absorption which leaves time and space and all the landmarks which indicate exactness of material position and relationship. Probably it is well that we should be on our guard against false rapture; that, however, ought not to exclude the possibility of lofty, pure contemplation; that sweet, tender, ineffable consciousness of nearness to the Cross and the Sufferer, the throne and the King, which constitute the very beginning and the truest enjoyment of heaven. "How that he was caught up into paradise"—the place of blessed spirits, the home of the white-robed and the free, the abiding place of those who have not known sin, or who having known it shall know it no more for ever, because they

have lost the sin in losing the body—"and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." The pedant would find here a striking contradiction in terms. The pedant is always in search of such small game; let him fill his bag with them, he may eat them all, and he will be the leaner for his feast. "Unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter,"—which it is not possible for a man to utter: incoherences, wave of music rolling on wave, billow interlapping with billow, shoutings, exclamations, whisperings hardly breaking silence, minor tones which children or child-angels might utter in a state of fear or reverent expectancy, and great thunderings that shook the sanctuary of the heavens: what the music said I cannot tell. It is poor music that can be shut up in the prison of words. Music takes words as a starting point; music leaves the point of articulate origin and flies away, talks all languages. Paul says "Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities." (xii. 5.) And yet he was talking all the time about himself. But a man has many selves. He has a past self, a dead self, a blessed self, a mean, sneaking, infamous, detestable self, and sometimes a heroic and majestic self. Here the pedant would be at home again. If the pedant can be at home anywhere do not begrudge him a lodging. "For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me" (xii. 6). I will not have my reputation founded on things that cannot be tested: in other words, If the part of my life that can be tested is not real, solid, criticism-proof, then I will not ask you to accept any ghostly pretensions I may have to offer: judge the internal by the external: where you cannot follow me in my ecstasies follow me in my endurances: if you give me credit for having been and having suffered all that I have just detailed, then you will have no difficulty in following me into the mystic region that you may hear what I have passed through in my passage into the eternal sanctuary.

"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure" (xii. 7).

A "thorn" seems a very slight thing; but the word "thorn"

is not the word which the Apostle used,—There was given to me a stake in the flesh,\* a great beam sharpened at one end was set upon me and driven in, until my body was impaled. The Apostle Paul had a body that was hardly manageable. All his writings contain subtle references to this fact. We speak of Paul's raptures and ecstasies, and we say if we were only like Paul, what we would be and do in relation to the age in which we live. No man had such a fight of it as the Apostle Paul. He was all fire. His blood was ablaze night and day. He dared hardly look in some directions. This is to be found out by a careful and critical perusal of his writings. He says, I find a law in my members warring against the law of the spirit; he says O, wretched man that I am, who will cut off this dead carcase; it will damn me; is there no knife sharp enough to cut this body? He says, I keep myself under, I strike myself in the eyes, lest having preached to others I myself should be a castaway. Every morning Paul had a controversy to settle with his body; every night he had a battle to fight with his flesh; all the day long the devil sprang upon his passions, and sought to drive him to hell. There have been spiritualisers who have found various interpretations of this image of the thorn or the stake in the flesh. It can only be understood by reading the whole of the Pauline experiences as subtly and indicatively written in the Epistles themselves. Some have said that the Apostle suffered in his eyes. All this seems to me to be frivolous and trifling. The Lord gave him work enough at home to do, and because he battled well himself he battled well with the world. Men who have never been in hell are not fit to speak of heaven. Beware of your little dainty epicurean confectionery preachers, who have never been scorched in perdition. The greatest souls are they who have been their three days in hell as well as their three days in heaven.

What became of this fray? "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me." That was a mean prayer. Yet now and then we must be mean even in our supplications, because we are still in the flesh, and we are still human. Paul the

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\* See note, *post*, page 408.

majestic, the royal, once uttered this mean petition—"that it might depart from me." What was the answer? The answer was greater than the prayer. God's answers always humble our petitions by their excess of donation, inspiration, and blessing:—And the Lord said unto me, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." It is better to wrestle under the inspiration of the grace of God than to live a merely negative life, of having no temptation, and no thorn in the flesh, and no difficulty in the life. Yet we want to pray God day by day that we may have nothing to do. Our prayer would seem to be run into this mean form; Lord, kill the devil; take away temptation: let me know no more of the solicitude that plagues my life; but give me perfect immunity from all the disasters and assaults and perils that have hitherto beset my struggling life. That is meanness. The great bold heroic prayer is—Lord give me grace to fight this also; in thy power I can trample down a thousand; I am but a little one, but if thou wilt fight in me, I shall put ten thousand to flight, I shall burn the gates of the city of the enemy, and come back laden with spoil taken from the hand of the foe; give me more suffering, if by it I can do better work; let the controversy increase in urgency, if by thy grace I can conquer the temptation and become mellow, tender, richer in all spiritual experience, and in all religious and sympathetic utterance. But we cannot begin with that prayer: such prayers are to be grown up to; the next thing after such prayers is music, triumph, heaven.

Now the Apostle passes out of the negative condition altogether, and says: "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (xii. 10). I have again found myself in a paradox. You Corinthians and you Galatians will always think me paradoxical;—I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God—it is not a flesh life at all: and now when I am weak, then am I strong; when I have nothing, I have all things. To the pedant, these are paradoxes, literal contradictions, fine food for the dainty stomach of ill-favoured and ill-natured criticism: but

in the higher ranges of experience they are the common-places of the spiritual life; for now the Christian is as low as earth, and now high as heaven; now midnight is midday, and now midday is midnight.

Then the Apostle takes himself to task and says,—

“I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing. Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds. For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches?” (xii. 11-13).

He turns upon the Corinthians now. When a man has treated himself in a right way his back-stroke upon the foe is like the stroke of a battering-ram. Let me see, as if the Apostle would say, wherein did I get wrong: I know it: I myself was not burdensome to you; I took no salary, I took nothing from you; I did not ask you to give me of your carnal things in return for my spiritual things—“forgive me this wrong.” What a man he was! How many his moods! A man of a thousand faces, a man of a thousand tones of expression. He comes to this, that at last he sees where he got wrong. He says, I took nothing from you, I gave you my soul; and you gave me nothing—“forgive me this wrong.” “I seek not yours, but you,” and therefore yours. What a statesmanlike conception! “I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you the less I be loved.” There the Apostle parts company with us. But such deeds have been done by our elder brother, the Apostle Paul. We have not yet begun that course of high athletics. The more I love you, the less I be loved. I have laid down my very soul for you, yet you never gave me a crumb from your tables. I was wrong in not asking for it—forgive me this wrong.

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#### NOTE.

“The particular nature of this Epistle, as an appeal to facts in favour of his own Apostolic authority, leads to the mention of many interesting features of St. Paul's life. His summary, in xi. 23-28, of the hardships and dangers through which he had gone, proves to us how little the history in the Acts is to be regarded as a complete account of what he did and



suffered. Of the particular facts stated in the following words, 'Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one; thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep,'—we know only of *one*, the beating by the magistrates at Philippi, from the Acts. The daily burden of 'the care of all the churches' seems to imply a wide and constant range of communication, by visits, messengers, and letters, of which we have found it reasonable to assume examples in his intercourse with the Church of Corinth. The mention of 'visions and revelations of the Lord,' and of the 'thorn (or rather *stake*) in the flesh,' side by side, is peculiarly characteristic both of the mind and of the experiences of St. Paul. As an instance of the visions, he alludes to a trance which had befallen him fourteen years before, in which he had been caught up into paradise, and had heard unspeakable words. Whether this vision *may be* identified with any that is recorded in the Acts must depend on chronological considerations: but the very expressions of St. Paul in this place would rather lead us not to think of an occasion in which words *that could be reported* were spoken. We observe that he speaks with the deepest reverence of the privilege thus granted to him; but he distinctly declines to ground anything upon it as regards other men. Let them judge him, he says, not by any such pretensions, but by facts which were cognizable to them (xii. 1-6). And he would not, even inwardly with himself, glory in visions and revelations without remembering how the Lord had guarded him from being puffed up by them. A stake in the flesh (*σκόλοψ τῇ σαρκί*) was given him, a messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure. The different interpretations which have prevailed of this *σκόλοψ* have a certain historical significance. (1) Roman Catholic divines have inclined to understand by it strong *sensual temptation*. (2) Luther and his followers take it to mean temptations to *unbelief*. But neither of these would be 'infirmities' in which St. Paul could 'glory.' (3) It is almost the unanimous opinion of modern divines—and the authority of the ancient fathers on the whole is in favour of it—that the *σκόλοψ* represents some vexatious *bodily infirmity* (see especially Stanley *in loco*). It is plainly what St. Paul refers to in Gal. iv. 14: 'My temptation in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected.' This infirmity distressed him so much that he besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from him. But the Lord answered, 'My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.' We are to understand therefore the affliction as remaining; but Paul is more than resigned under it, he even glories in it as a means of displaying more purely the power of Christ in him. That we are to understand the Apostle, in accordance with this passage, as labouring under some degree of ill-health, is clear enough. But we must remember that his constitution was at least strong enough, as a matter of fact, to carry him through the hardships and anxieties and toils which he himself describes to us, and to sustain the pressure of the long imprisonment at Cæsarea and at Rome."—SMITH'S *Dictionary of the Bible*.



## 2 Corinthians xi. 26.

"In perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness."

### ENVIRONMENT.

LET us talk a little about what is known as environment. Men are apt to think they would be better if their circumstances, their surroundings, were of another kind and quality. They do not go in upon themselves, and say, We are to blame. They look outside and say, If the house were larger, if the circumstances were pleasanter, if the neighbourhood were other than it is, one could live and grow, and realise a large measure of happiness. There is no greater delusion. We must get rid of that delusion before we can make any real progress in life. All history shows us that whatever a man's environment may be, he can conquer it, he can rise above it; or he can respond to it in the degree in which it is Divine, beautiful, and fascinating. Where did man first fall, according to the biblical history? Was it in some narrow, ill-lighted street? Was it in some swamp, or wilderness? What was the environment in the first case? There is your answer to the foolish and often wicked sophism that there is no fault in you, but the fault lies wholly in the circumstances, and if you were only surrounded as you would like to be, there would be no better man. The Bible tells us that our first parents fell in a garden; fell in Paradise; fell where the air was clear, where the skies were blue, where the rivers fourfold threw back all the beauty of heaven. That is your answer. It was possible to fall in Eden. Therefore do not say that if you were in Eden you would be safe. Pay some respect to the monitions of history. Always allow within the scope of your reasoning a place for facts.

Men say that, if they were only in the city, at the very centre of civilisation, if they had the security of social life as it is to be

found in the metropolis of any country, all would go well. The Apostle Paul answers that in our text, "In perils in the city." You thought you would be safe in the city. There is no place so unsafe. We are not aware that God ever built any city; the city-builder was a man of poor fame. Here is Paul in all kinds of cities, classical, advanced, thoughtful, immoral; and he says he was "in perils in the city." Men think that if they could be only in the city, in the metropolis, where there is an abundance of literature, where all kinds of galleries are open to the people—picture-galleries, museums, art-repositories, music of every hue and range—then they would have something to think about, and to engage their attention, and to divide at least the intensity of the temptations by which souls are besieged. Paul says, let us repeat again and again, "In perils in the city." The city grows its own weeds; the city opens its own fountains of poison-water. It is almost impossible to get to heaven from the city: blessed be God for that word "almost"; it is beautiful as a path lying through a wilderness, or trackless forest. We do not need much path to walk upon, if we want to get away; we do not stand and say, If this road were large, if it were sixty feet wide, if it were well macadamised, we would not mind taking it, in order to get clear of this difficulty or perplexity. The moment we see one little footprint, the moment we see what may even be little more than a sheep-track, away we fly, because we want to get rid of danger, and we want to get into security, and we do not wait until a great broad turnpike is made, or where there is a path specially made by other human feet; we enlarge the whole occasion into an opportunity of deliverance, we seize it, and realise it, and fly for our lives. Why do we not do the same in all moral difficulty, in all moral danger? The "city" may be taken as representing all cities; we are not speaking about a city, a particular or specific city, but about the city,—the place where men do gather together in great crowds—the centres of population. The city is eating out the best life of the nation.

We should be surprised, if a true census could be taken, how much evil is being done by men whom we do not suspect as connected with any evil at all. The public journals very often contain painful illustrations of this. A man has been found

in circumstances of criminality. He has been detected; and to the surprise of the whole town he is found to be a man somewhat noted for activity in Christian service. He wore his religion as a cloak, nobody would suspect him, and he therefore could play the burglar without suspicion. When will a true census be taken? When will every man be classified in the right category? God forbid we should ever see the lists, it would shock our faith in man, it might shatter our faith in God.

"In perils in the city." Yet how many of these perils do we make ourselves, and how eagerly do we avail ourselves of many an open door that invites us to enter and go down to hell! I have seen this in the city—namely, young men, certainly not five-and-twenty years of age, before ten o'clock in the morning going into public-houses. Not vagabonds, but men who were evidently going to some kind of business afterwards, well-dressed young men. What would you say about an instance of that kind, except that it means ruin? I do not care who the man is; no man can indulge in a practice of that kind, and be either a good man or a good man of business, a good citizen or a good neighbour, or a good member of any family; certainly he can never secure success. There is something vitally wrong there; the end of that course is death. I know of young men who have had their homes broken up and their families scattered, because of this same temptation and yielding to it. Men have said, under other circumstances, men who have read a good deal, and men who are not indisposed to certain kinds of Christian practice, that the evil power has got such a hold upon them that it laughs at them, and says in effect, You cannot pass this inn. And the man says, I will go by this bar to-day. Ten yards off he prays that he may get past it; five yards nearer he thinks he has received an answer to prayer; two yards, and still his will seems equal to the occasion; when suddenly, as if the whole air had become a tempter, he is arrested and turned in, and a spirit of mockery laughs in the wind, because he has once more stooped over the pit, and told the devil to reckon upon him as one of his black army. You cannot trifle with that state of affairs. You cannot begin a little reform now and a little then. You must throw your enemy now!

"In perils in the city." What a temptation there is there to bet and gamble and trifle with other people's money! You do not suppose that a young man makes up his mind to be a thief. In many instances he knows that he is honest in purpose, and he says that, if he can only succeed, no man shall lose a penny by him; he will only back his own judgment against some other man's judgment. He says, "What harm can there be in my setting up my sagacity against the sagacity of some other man? He says that such and such issues will take place, I say they will not take place, we stake a hundred pounds upon the consequence: have I not a right to back my judgment against his?" No, you have not; you have no right to do anything that will burn up your brain; you have no right to give yourself a fever; you have no right so to strain your nervous system that you will lose every faculty of manhood, and subject yourself to all the humiliation of the most pitiable imbecility. The question does not lie between A and B, between this man and that man; the question touches the whole universe, and no man has any right to do anything that will infect and vitiate the air of society. You cannot be fortunate in betting and gambling. Do not say that you know instances in which men have made tens of thousands of pounds, and are in great prosperity. There are no such instances. They may have all the pounds, but they have not the prosperity. They cannot enjoy them; they are living a false life, their whole life is set in a false key, and if they had all the millions that are in the repositories of the banks of the world they would still be poor miserable, despicable creatures. There is no prosperity in wickedness. It looks like prosperity, it has all the appearance of it, but though the men you speak of be clothed in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day, it all ends in "He died, he was buried, and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment,"—a poor ending, a miserable *dénouement*. Oh, to have lived to this catastrophe!—tell me, is it worth your while? You say you only bet a little. That is impossible. A man cannot bet a little. It may be little merely as to the nominal amount, little in an arithmetical sense, but when a man bets his soul is the wager; the devil will take nothing less. The sixpence you bet is the earnest that your soul is coming. Do not think you can trifle with the spirit of evil, and succeed; do not imagine that you, poor

lad, a boy, can go out and talk such eloquence to that old serpent the devil, that you will be able to convert him. He has no pity, he has nothing within him that can be appealed to by human reason and human need, he lives to destroy. Resist the devil, and he will flee from thee.

Then what do men say? They continue in this fashion,—namely, If I could only get away from the city. I have such young men now as my clients and appellants for pastoral direction and friendly sympathy. If I could only get away from the city, if I could get into the country somewhere, if I could get into some quiet place, then all would be well. Paul says, “in perils in the wilderness.” There is the contrastive word. If he ran away from the city that he might find security and peace in the wilderness, he made a mistake and he confesses it. Observe the obvious and tremendous contrast—“In perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness”—in the solitude, in the great emptiness; as much peril in the wilderness as there is in Cheapside, as much peril in the desert as there is in the Stock Exchange. “In perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness.” How often in passing through beautiful places have we said, Surely there must be peace in that habitation and in yonder dwelling: how lovely the situation! see the flowers creeping all over the windows, see the roses drooping over the doorway; hear the birds, how they sing, and lilt, and trill: here and there surely unrest is impossible, and sin must be unknown. Hear the Apostle Paul,—“In perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness;” let the word “wilderness” stand for solitude, for peacefulness, for all that is typical of being secured from the ravages of so-called civilisation. Go where you will, you will find the devil has been there before you. There are great perils even in solitude: in fact, it is possible that solitude may be the greatest peril of all. It is the voice of history that the devil comes to men individually, and not to them in crowds only. All the great tragedies are connected with individual instances. The woman was walking alone, and the serpent said unto her—but one life—“Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” The devil entered into Cain: the devil entered into Judas: the devil finds out the individual case that will serve his interests most, through which he can do the



largest amount of mischief, and there he works with characteristic, with indomitable, and often successful, energy. Solitude gives us a false standard of self-judgment. A man becomes important in the sense in which he dwells alone. If he never speaks to anybody but himself and to those who may be a little lower than he is, see how he fattens on his own conceit; what a man of judgment he is, and what a man of authority! he is monarch of all he surveys; he never goes outside his own limitation, and therefore he feeds himself with vanity, and he knows not that he is poor and weak as other men. See how soon he is offended; observe what a distaste he has for the society of mankind. All his judgments are thus judgments of mental vanity and conceit; they want largeness, massiveness; they want the education of attrition, friction, conflict. It is only by man meeting man, comparing himself with his fellow-men, seeking the judgment of higher minds than his own, that he becomes chastened, and thus ennobled; rebuked, and thus elevated.

Observe, then, that circumstances cannot give us security. You thought that, when you made ten thousand pounds, you would be perfectly secure. No man ever rested content with ten thousand pounds, or ten million pounds; there was always another sovereign which some other man had, which he wanted; there was always another field which, if he obtained, would beautifully sphere out his estate; and going after fields is like going after the horizon, there is always "another." Do not imagine that if you were rich you would be good, or even that if you were in strong, robust health you would be without vice; understand that the true environment is within, and understand that it is indwelling that Christ promises to us. He does not promise a cordon of security, as a belt of armed men; he promises that he will come and his Father will come and sup with the man, and will abide with the heart. That is the environment, the spiritual association, the noble sympathy with noble thought. Let no man be discouraged because of his environment. You say, What can a young man do in my circumstances? He can do everything through Christ strengthening him. A short time since I met the man who is the hero, and justly the hero, of the hour. I refer to the great African traveller. What has he done? He has shamed



many of us. We thought we were doing much, but having read his record we feel that we have been doing nothing, compared with what he has done, by courage, by resoluteness, by self-denial, by heroic ideals. He was born under circumstances which might well have discouraged any man; the universe must look very small and poor and distressful from the workhouse window. If men begin to sit down and say, What can I do with only five shillings a week? what can I do with only a workhouse education? what can I do with people such as these round about me? they will never come to anything. A man must not look at his surroundings, but he must look at his universe and at God enthroned above its riches and forces; and he must say, It is my business by the blessing of God to take hold of circumstances and twist them and bind them, and round them into a garland or a diadem. So long as history is accessible, all your moaning and whining about your circumstances must amount to nothing. It may be difficult to find any great and grand man as to circumstances who ever did anything very great; or, if he did it, he often did it through the instrumentality of men that were of no account. I find that our hero of the hour has written it that he received a workhouse training. There he stood, physically not tall, and not imposing-looking. What have these great grand men around him done? Dined with him!

## 2 Corinthians xiii.

"I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates" (ver. 6).

### CHRISTIAN APOSTLESHIP.

THERE ought to be no difficulty about the expression of so extremely modest a wish. What is a reprobate? Is it some kind of apostle? By "reprobate" we generally understand a man who is in about the worst possible moral condition. When a man is as bad as he can be we call him a reprobate. There is a theology which is very fond of this word. The Apostle does not wish to be included in the class of reprobates, outcasts, men only fit to be trodden under foot, persons absolutely destitute of character, moral dignity, or claim to Christian attention and confidence. But is this the meaning of the word "reprobates" as it is found in this text? Were this the real meaning of the word there can be no doubt as to what we should say in reply to the Apostle Paul. But this is not the meaning of the word. What that meaning is we must discover, little by little, by carefully looking at the context.

The Apostle says, "Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me" (ver. 3). The Corinthians had begun to doubt his apostleship. When we do not like a ministry, there is nothing so easy as to doubt its orthodoxy, to question its moral superiority, and to throw doubts generally upon its authenticity. When we like a ministry we easily see the Divine Being in it. When a ministry suits us, is more anxious for consolation than for correction, is more deeply solicitous that we should be quiet than that we should be correct, we can easily discover traces of Divine election and ordination. When it is rousing, passionate, vehement in moral demand; when it is exacting, rigorous; it is easy for us to question the divinity of its origin, and the value of its whole function. The Corinthians did not like what Paul had done;

they thought that he was severe ; his was a heavy hand, and the rod was not spared. They began to question his apostleship, they sought a proof of Christ speaking in him. What does Paul say in reply ?

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith : prove your own selves."—(Verse 5.)

We might read these words monotonously, and so reading them should miss their whole meaning. Everything depends upon the identification of the emphasis in this exhortation. Reading the words in English we should say, "Examine yourselves," placing the emphasis upon the verb ; there the weight would be in place ; it is there that the voice has to interpret the sentiment : "prove your own selves," thus laying the weight once more upon the verb. But so distributing the emphasis we miss the Apostle's meaning. In the language he wrote he put the pronoun before the verb, and thus gave the pronoun the emphasis. Instead of saying, "examine yourselves," he said, "yourselves examine." Who does not see that the commentary is in the emphasis? "Your own selves prove:" were we reading in English and saying "examine yourselves," we should be justly exposed to the criticism of a false emphasis, because such a word is seldom required to bear the whole weight of the voice ; but as Paul wrote it the emphasis came naturally upon the pronoun—"yourselves examine." Thus we have the balance with verse 3—"Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me"—or, in me speaking—"yourselves examine": let the spear be thrust into your own hearts ; be not so anxious about my apostleship as about your own condition in God's sanctuary.

Characteristically he enlarges the occasion. The fourth verse has about it something of the distance, the reserve, and the subtlety of a parenthesis—"For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God,"—better : he, or even he, was crucified through weakness, yet his weakness was only transitory, a necessary element in a marvellous process, for he now liveth by the power of God. "For we also are weak in him,"—we share his infirmities, we have to be weak in order to know what it is to be strong,—“but we shall live with him,” not hereafter, not in any sense of immortality, but we shall now

live with him, representing his logosity, and clothing ourselves at his command with his authority, and with the right of exercising discipline which he alone can confirm. Then emerging out of the parenthesis, he comes to the words already quoted—"yourselves examine." The Apostle always descends upon us from a great level. He does not meet us on our own line, and chaffer with us as if we were equals; he comes to us from the tabernacle unseen, from the very temple and altar of God. He first lifts up the mind to new levels, whence new perceptions can be enjoyed, perceptions of truth and holiness and spiritual beauty; and then the moral exhortation falls upon us with an infinite impetus. If men would examine themselves they would not be uncharitably disposed towards others. Can the devil, master of all tricks, play more successfully with a man than to tell him that he is always right, and that all he has to do is to find fault with other people? Human nature takes easily to that kind of inspiration. Every man is pleased to be crowned with a tiara; every soul is delighted to think that, after all, though he did not know it at the time, he was the very pope of God; there is something soothing and tranquillising and ineffably comforting about the thought that a man is the very vice-regent of God, that when he speaks all other men are to regard themselves as snubbed dogs. It is not easy to dislodge such a sophism from the heart. The Apostle Paul would have nothing to do with that kind of self-gratulation and self-sufficiency. "Yourselves examine: your own selves prove": let charity begin at home: it is a pity that judgment should begin abroad; let them both begin at the same place and at the same time. He who is most severe with himself is most gentle with others; he who has felt his weakness admires and appreciates what appears to him at least to be the strength of other men.

Now we come to the exact meaning of the word "reprobates." The sixth verse opens with a "But," thus connecting it, whilst apparently disjoining it, with what has gone before. "But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates": you cannot estimate us until you have estimated yourselves; until you have passed the examination you cannot tell whether we have passed the scrutiny or not. The figure is that of a scrutiny, a

careful examination of every claim, a thorough critical testing of every aspiration, a severe weighing as with balances of gold in the light of the sun of every claim to Christian confidence. Now, said the Apostle, but I trust that ye shall know that we are not *adokimoi*, unable to pass the scrutiny:—not reprobates a substantive, but reprobate, rejected, not weight, unequal to the occasion, men who cannot pass the proof, the examination, or men who cannot stand the test. The Apostle thus asks simply to be examined after self-examination on the part of others; as who should say, Get yourselves right; be quite sure about your own spiritual standing before God; filter yourselves; pass through the narrow and strait gate and weigh yourselves; and then I trust that ye shall know that we also are able to pass the examination: you will be more gentle and gracious, therefore more just, towards us: your own selves prove, your own selves examine; and then I trust ye shall know that we are better men than you supposed us at first to be, for we have stood the test, we have passed the general scrutiny, and we have answered the personal demand of God and his righteousness, but—

“Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates.”—(Verse 7.)

How willing to sacrifice himself for a moment or two, to undergo misapprehension! how apparently willing to be looked at with some degree of suspicion, if only he could get his scholars advanced a step or two! as who should say once more, Be you right: proceed on your own way; avail yourselves of every holy opportunity to become better men, even if we should be not quite so good as you thought us to be, even although you may suspect our inability to pass the examination or the proof. No such blemish in himself does he conceive or admit in any way; but, he says, Though we be as rejected, though we be unable to pass the examination, let it stand so for a moment,—only what I say to you is, Do no evil; and having advanced to this negative position, then, do that which is honest, and, as for us, examiners, disciplinarians, apostles, “we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.” This is a passage which is often misunderstood. The Apostle does not stand up and say, I am the champion of the truth, I can do nothing against the



truth ; whatever I do is true and right ; look upon me as an infallible man, as one who has attained, and is already perfect. That is not the meaning of the Apostle's words. Nor does he even say, We can do nothing against the truth, because it is mightier than we are, and he who would oppose a beam of timber to the oncoming of infinite billows is a fool. That is not his speech or plea. He is talking of himself as an apostolical disciplinarian, and he says, we can do nothing against the truth : if there is no offence in you, our discipline cannot take effect ; if you are right, you have nothing to fear from discipline ; if you are consciously right you should invite examination after having undergone it yourselves, for we can only set fire to fuel ; and if you do not supply the fuel, any fire we may apply will be utterly without effect in your case.

Thus would the Apostle make them perfect parties to the whole process. But he would have them qualified before they took any part in it. Few men come from the secret sanctuary in a temper to criticise other men severely. When a man has been really praying, his eyes are opened towards the excellences rather than towards the defects of other men. If a man says when he returns from the sanctuary that he sees the world full of defect and blemish and failure and falsehood, he has not been praying, he does not know what it is to take Christ's view of human nature. Christ was no pessimist. Christ looked hopefully upon the wandering and the lost, and sent messages after them, and pledged his whole almightiness on the side of their redemption. We should be mighty in love after we have been mighty in prayer. Read, then, We are powerless against the truth ; discipline has no effect of an evil kind upon good and honest hearts : but where the character is wrong, discipline will take effect, and ought to take effect, for all badness is elected to spend its eternity in hell. That is the election of God—an election of character, quality ; that is the purpose of heaven. Then, with characteristic fatherhood—for every great Christian apostle is amongst us as father and mother and nurse, always binding us up, and unwilling to let the weakest die—says : " For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong : and this also we wish, even your perfection " (ver. 9) ; we are quite

willing to be looked upon as infirm, weak, inadequate, all but incapable, if so be we can live again in you, and see our strength in your power. "And this also we wish, even your perfection." How many mistakes are made about this last word! There are persons now who are advocating perfection. Does the word mean perfectness, as the common etymology would imply? Nothing of the sort: "and this also we wish, even your"—watch the encouragement and the rebuke how they mingle in the apostolic eloquence—"your restoration." Now, we see that you have advanced in nine paces towards the journey that may be accomplished in ten, and we wish you, almost perfect Corinthians, to take the tenth step, and be perfect. The figure is very graphic. The exact word never occurs elsewhere in the New Testament. A corresponding word is found in the English of "they were mending their nets": this also we wish, your mending, your repair, your restoration: be mending yourselves; that is our apostolic wish for you. The word also occurs in Paul's Epistle to the Galatians—"Ye who are spiritual, restore such an one." The figure there is out of joint, it is out of socket; the Apostle says, If any man have become disjointed, ye who are spiritual play the surgeon, and rejoin such a one in a spirit of meekness, doing it very carefully and gently, considering thyself, lest thou also have a joint out of socket, lest thou also require the surgeon. How mighty, how gentle, how like a man, how assuredly a shepherd of the flock! That this is his idea is made evident as he proceeds; for he speaks in the tenth verse of "the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction": or, according to the Revised Version, "the Lord hath given me to building up, not to casting down." We have often said that any beast can crush a flower: such low miracles let us leave to the beasts, otherwise we should spoil their tinsel glory. Any maniac could destroy the abbey, the minster. Destruction is the easiest of all things. But the Apostle says his power was given to building up, to making men firmer, stronger, completer; the power to edify, until the pinnacle pierce the heavens and proclaim its radiance because of its completeness. This is the ministry we all need. When the minister is hard with me, I am afraid, I tremble before his rebuke, but when he comes down to me and says, I have been

as weak as you are, and worse than you are; and if you had broken every commandment every day since you were born, God's love is greater than your sin, Christ's Cross is mightier than all your iniquity,—immediately I begin to feel that I am in the presence of one who is as God's messenger, and I bless him that he has not destroyed the last lingering beam of light. Let us do what we can to build men up, to edify them in knowledge, in truth, in love, and in every element of strong, solid character; then our ministry cannot be put down; men will need it, long for it, expect it, yea they will say, Open to me the gates of righteousness, and let me enter in, and hear from man's mouth God's indubitable word.

What is the New Testament way of dealing with men who are wrong? For the existence of wrong we must admit. The Apostle, with all his noble sentiment, has never shown that he has blinded himself to the immoralities of the Church, but still he saw the Church under the immorality, above the immorality. He opens his letter as if he were addressing angels in heaven; he closes his letter with benedictions that are like gentle mothers' arms round about us; but between the exordium and the benediction he has been clear enough in his moral views, exacting enough in his discipline; he has spared none. Yet he cannot finish his letter without "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen."—(ver. 14)—without saying that his whole meaning all the time was to build us up. Admitting, therefore, the existence of wrong, what is the New Testament way of dealing with men who are guilty of wrong? First, there is Christ's way; what does the Master say?—"Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee thou hast gained thy brother." Have we not dwelt upon these words already with rapture? "Thou hast gained thy brother;" bring him as a trophy of battle, bring him as snatched from the hand of the spoiler, bring him home, and rejoice together with godly mirthfulness, with holiest joy. "But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he

shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church ; but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican" (Matt. xviii. 16, 17). We should have heard Christ's voice when he uttered these words, for the tears would have added dignity to the tone. Then there is Paul's method ; how does Paul deal with men who have done wrong ? He tells us in his Epistle to the Galatians. "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed." Then it was simple decency, then it was real manliness, then it was Christian apostolicity. How otherwise the passage might have read ! "But when Peter was come to Antioch he found a leading article in the morning journal, that took him down a great deal." The article was anonymous. No doubt he would wonder who wrote it. But that article did not spare him. The Apostle Paul did not do so ; he said, "When Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed." When such honesty prevails in the Church we shall have a true revival of true godliness. He proceeds : "And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him ; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation." Why, Paul names his men ! How extremely injudicious ; he might have been brought up for it ! Then he proceeds : "But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel, I said unto Peter before them all." This was discipline, this was apostolicity, with a breadth of meaning and with a sacred unction we can hardly understand to-day. But this was Paul's method of dealing with all these things. Exhorting Timothy, he says, "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear." Addressing the same loved disciple in a second letter, he says, "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me ; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes." Then again he says, "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." He does not say "somebody has forsaken me, somebody has gone wrong, the whole apostleship is a disgrace and is a mistake." He names the men, he specifies the charges, he meets them face to face ; and there is no other honest course to be taken. These indications of personal apostasy or wrongdoing are the more suggestive, because none so much as Paul

was so appreciative of the excellences of other men. Read the closing chapter of the Epistle to the Romans; not a name forgotten, not a service neglected, the whole Church remembered as it were one by one for every cup of cold water given, for every prayer shared or stimulated. The man was equal on both sides; an infinitely generous heart, and yet an infinitely critical judgment; sparing none who did wrong, but if he judged them with the severity of righteousness he hastened to heal them with all the clemency and redemptiveness of love.

Now, in view of these reflections, we submit, first, that it may be absolutely necessary to bring personal charges. Christian men must face every difficulty attendant upon this necessity. If any man is unfaithful to his queen, and yet wears the queen's uniform, he should be pointed out, named, and there should be created for him an opportunity of refuting the charge as a calumny, or accepting it as a just judgment. Then, secondly, some necessary charges should be made in grief, not in anger. Everything depends upon the distinction which is here drawn. We may accuse a man without having in us the spirit of accusation; we may almost ask his permission to put our feeling into words. Wantonly to accuse a man is one thing, but solemnly, tenderly, in a grief-stricken spirit, to say to the man, I may be mistaken—I pray God I am—but I feel that you are not preaching Christ's Gospel, or that I am not; we cannot both be preaching it; let us talk this matter over, lovingly, frankly, prayerfully; if I am right, you are wrong; if you are right, I am wrong; how does the case stand before God? and who can tell what breaking down there may be on both sides? what a running of heart towards heart, what a clearing up of difficulties, what a rectification of mistakes, with a grand reunion of souls; yet, if it should come to a cleavage that cannot be repaired, then let it be solemnly recognised; and let all proper consequences ensue. This, according to my reading of apostolic custom and spirit, would have been the course taken by the Apostle Paul.

I would further submit, that the most odious of all heresies is an uncharitable spirit. You cannot preach the evangelical doctrine without having first the evangelic spirit. Many persons imagine



that, by merely naming a number of words and doctrines, they are preaching evangelically. Evangelical preaching is a question of temper, spirit, disposition, solicitude of heart. The evangelical preacher cannot preach without tears, without tenderness ineffable. When Bishop Ken died some one got his Bible, and on trying to open it the book fell open of itself. The friend once more tried to open it, and the book seemed almost spontaneously to fall open at the same place. Curiosity was excited. The portion of Scripture at which the Bible fell open was, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing." We can tell which part of the Bible a man has been using by looking at the Bible itself. There is a self-revealing power about the use to which a Bible has been put. Some of us always fall open at a particular place, but I am afraid it is often at an imprecatory Psalm. Why should we not always open our heart, life and spirit at the holy words, "Now abideth faith, hope, charity; these three; but the greatest of these is love." A man may preach orthodoxy in a heterodox spirit. No man can preach orthodoxy wantonly, defiantly, blatantly; the Cross can only be preached by the crucified; blood can only be represented by tears. God's Gospel ceases to be a Gospel when it is uttered with iron lips. It must be declared with trembling and tenderness, sympathy and anxiety; then will the preacher be lost behind his message, and the Cross will be its own illustration. Do not believe that the divisions of Christianity or of Christian communions are any reflection upon Christianity itself; trace all differences of opinion, all separations into communions, to the vastness of Christianity, not to its littleness. Consider what it is; it is the kingdom of heaven, it is in very deed the kingdom of God; it is the all-including, all-absorbing kingdom. Who can deal with it in a concise way, or expect monotony and literal agreement? Finally, our business should be to find, not the infidel, but the believer in every man. Search for the Christian, even in the most doubtful character, and you may find more of him than you expected. We often get what we look for; want to make a man an infidel, and we soon accomplish the little miracle; want to make him a Christian, and even Zacchæus may stand up a son of Abraham.



## THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE

TO THE

## GALATIANS.

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[NOTE.—“Galatia was a large province in the centre of Asia Minor. It derived its name from the Gauls, who conquered the country and settled in it, about 280 B.C.: it was also called Gallo-Græcia, on account of the Greek colonists who afterwards became intermingled with them. About 189 B.C. it fell under the power of Rome: and became a Roman province, 26 B.C. The inhabitants were but partially civilised, and their system of idolatry was extremely gross and debasing.

“Paul and Silas travelled through this region about A.D. 51, and formed churches in it, which Paul visited again in his second journey three years afterwards. This Epistle was probably written soon after his first visit: see Acts xvi. 6: xviii. 23: Gal. i. 6, 8: iv. 13, 19.

“This Epistle resembles both the Epistles to the Corinthians and that addressed to the Romans. Like the first it defends Paul's apostolic authority and shows that he was taught immediately by Christ. Like the last it treats of justification by faith alone, from which the Galatians very soon after Paul left them, and greatly to his surprise, had been seduced by false teachers, who insisted on submission to the Mosaic law as essential to salvation, and probably insinuated that elsewhere Paul himself had urged the same doctrine. Mark the sharpness and tenderness of his rebuke (iii. 1: iv. 19): the place assigned to holiness, not as the ground but as the fruit of salvation, and inseparable from it (v. 6, 22). Mark also how little we can depend on ardour of religious feeling as proof of the strength of religious principle (iv. 15, 20).

“It is interesting to remark that the persons to whom this Epistle was addressed were Gauls (whose name in Greek is Galatians), both in name and in character. They manifest all the susceptibility of impression and fondness for change which authors from Cæsar to Thierry have ascribed to that race. They received the Apostle as an angel, and would have plucked out their eyes and given them to him; but were ‘soon removed’ by false teachers to another gospel,’ and then under the influence of the same ardour began to ‘bite and devour one another’ (iv. 14, 15: v. 15).”—ANGUS'S *Bible Handbook*.]

## Galatians i. 6.

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed."

## RELIGIOUS FICKLENESS.

THE Apostle does not speak in this letter as he speaks in almost every other Epistle. I notice the absence of the usual commendations. How the Apostle praises the Corinthians! "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in every thing ye are enriched by him . . . ye come behind in no gift;" and after that he lacerates them with a rod, forgetting all his encomiums. Read the Epistle to the Corinthians, compare the salutations with the anterior contents, and say where is the music. The Apostle Paul comes before the churches of Galatia with all his episcopal robes upon him: this time he is going to be an Apostle "(not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead)." Is there not a single word of the usual commendation? Not one. He praises the Lord Jesus Christ, but not the Galatians; he says of the Saviour "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." No sooner had he got the religious doxology uttered than he says—"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel." What, no kind word, no laying of the episcopal hand upon the arrant head, no look of love, no tear of pity? is it all dignity—overwhelming, overshadowing, annihilating dignity? So it would appear. In writing to the Corinthians Paul is dealing (with one exception, a most corrupt case indeed) with form, order, method of procedure, and the like. The Corinthians are indecently tumultuous, they know nothing about the genius of order, and of the peace which thrives under its benign sway. The Apostle approaches them with the lawful and abounding cunning of a man who knows human nature and how to deport himself in a riotous nursery. The Galatians were removed from God, from Christ, from the Author of the Gospel. This is no question of ceremony, order, precedence, and the music which comes from proportion; this is a vital heresy;

these are not fools only, they are criminals. "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ." This is a change of view, an alteration of opinion, a modification of the old credal basis, in reference to metaphysical statement or speculative doctrine : here is cancer of the heart.

But the Apostle approaches it with episcopal solemnity and apostolic dignity of the highest quality. Yet, when could Paul keep up the dignity all the way through ? Never, where human hearts were concerned. If there were no very visible goodness, he had that eye of the soul which sees a thing before it is visible. "My little children," he says ; now he is more like the old generous father Apostle, "I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them unto me." Now we know this Paul. So, if we did not find the dignity at the beginning, we find it where we did not expect to discover it, namely, in the process of castigation. "Ye did run well:" there is a little touch of the same fatherly recognition ; if he could have said more he would have filled the rest of his paper with it ; and he would bring himself in as part-offender on one of the outside lines, for, with a cunning use of the plural, he disarms the criticism of those who would make him out to be righteous over much, saying, "And let us." What an "us !" that Paul could make himself one with such a church—"let us not be weary in well doing." Then there is another touch of gentleness towards the end—"Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand:" would I have taken so much trouble with you, if I did not care for you ? am I your enemy because I have told you the truth ? Some say, See how I have written my letter in capitals,—either arising from his own want of keen eyesight, or that he might the more obviously appeal to the obstinacy and denseness of his correspondents. But he himself is struck with what he has written, as to its largeness and fulness, conveying thus a subtle hint of the depth and purity and holy agony of his solicitude. You will always find the love in Paul, if you look for it. We do not find it here like pillars in the vestibule ; we find it inside, growing all over like flowers that are willing to grow, flowers that, poetically speaking, are growing with their own consent,

and want to grow more and more, so as to hide everything under the mantle of beauty.

"Removed." The tense should be changed into the present—"I marvel that ye are so soon removing." He catches them in the act. He does not allow a man to complete the wrong, and then run miles after him to reproach him: he seizes the thief's hand while it is in his pocket; he says, I am surprised at you, stealing in this way. It is always so with the criticism of heaven; it falls upon us in the very middle of the deed. We have so covenanted with our memory as to have let out most of it to our treachery that we might constitute of our recollection a large acreage of cemetery: there we have buried our little children, vows half uttered; there we have buried our evil deeds, thinking we could dig down far enough to have them burned by some under-fire: but the Lord will not blow the blast of his trumpet over that cemetery; he comes to us in the very act and deed, and says, I marvel at you, killing Christ again, selling the Cross once more, making a merchandise of Golgotha: I marvel, "so soon removed," or, removing—a word which conveys the idea of treachery, apostasy; it is not a change of the mental standpoint, but a change of the heart loyalty. We speak in our day of turncoats, and perverts—men who have given up all that once dignified their manhood, and added beauty to their character; when we so speak we use in effect the word which Paul used when he said "removed," or removing. The Galatians were a new type of character; they were the Irishmen of their country—not metaphorically, but by the law and necessity of consanguinity. The Galatians were Irishmen; they were Celts, they were Irish and Welsh and Scotch, but mainly Irish—responsive, ardent, inflammable, immediate in every feeling and every action; with a wondrous genius of swinging round the compass, and declaring that they had never stirred a peg; they were so soon back again that they did not know that they had been away. Jerome was surprised when he found people in countries far away from one another talking the same language he had heard talked by men on the banks of the Rhine. We should travel more. You can never be really great in your soul, if you do not acquaint yourself, either by reading, intercourse, or travelling, with the fact that England after all is not the globe. The Apostle did not under-

stand these early Irishmen. He says, I marvel at you, and yet I love you; ye would have given me your eyes—a most Irish act—you would have given me your sight, if you could have helped me; oh, there is a redundancy of love in your warm soul! I truly appreciate you, but I marvel that ye are so inconstant, so little to be depended upon. And yet, in this very Epistle, Paul says the grandest things that ever human tongue uttered—"God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ"—and when he retires from the Galatians he says, "Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit." The morning of the Epistle was stormy—how calm was the sunset!

Look at religious fickleness as a matter of fact. Sometimes we exemplify it. We do so ecclesiastically. There are men who have been everything, and they look none the better for it. We say of them, Where are they now? Sometimes, by a wasted poesy of thought, such men are called "wandering stars"; they were brought up upon the strictest lines of the Church, and they went boldly over to the wildest departments of Dissent; or they were cradled on the knee of Dissent, and then they threw their arms around the neck of the Church: and they liked both equally well; that is to say, they had no particular liking for either of them. It is so doctrinally. There are those who could not themselves say just where they are. We do not want bigotry, narrow-mindedness, the kind of exclusiveness which lives solely upon the garbage of uncharitableness; but we do want something like dignity, certainty, clearness of conception. Not about details; we do not want that particular genius which can reconcile all opinions, but we want that centred heart that cannot live but in the Cross. I do not care to propound theories, and discuss speculations, and invite men to coincide with me in all the outgoings of my thought: but I do want men to live on Calvary. I long for all men to say, Jesus, my Lord and my God; my High Priest, without whom I have no answer to God, and no answer to myself; the crown be thine. After that, who cares to follow men into the vagaries of thinking, or even into the higher levels of speculation? We shall come right in all these matters, if we are right in relation to the Cross of Christ.

Look at this matter of religious fickleness as one of surprise—"I marvel," I wonder, I am amazed. What is the Apostle amazed at? He is amazed at such shallowness of character; there is nothing in these people; you can sound the depths of the water in which they sail with your finger-tip; there is no water to swim in; a river for a boat? impossible. An ocean for a navy? impossible! You cannot find in such people even the very first element of healthy progress, wise and modest self-respect. We are amazed at fickle religious people, because they make such fools of themselves. They are always finding some new little piece of paper, on which there is written something they cannot make out, but which perfectly entrances them by the brilliance of its genius. You have noticed the vagaries of the east wind. I can always tell where the wind is, by the little pieces of white and brown and blue paper that are in the gutters of the city; I do not look so high as the weather-vane to know where the wind is; the north-east wind or the east wind has quite a cunning trick of finding out all the little pieces of paper in the town, and blowing them round about the kerbstones. You have seen them whirling round the streets. Whenever I see these little tumults I say, The wind is in the east; the south wind never found such paper, the west wind never goes after such rags, but the east wind will not let them alone; it is a kind of terrier that hunts them up, a ferret that goes into every hole and says, They must come out! Well, these fickle people run after all these pieces of paper, and they do not know whether their religion is on the blue paper or on the white, or if it may not be wrapped up in that little roll of white paper just gone by (just run after that, if you please), because that may contain the philosophy of the universe. I marvel, says Paul, that you make such fools of yourselves; why do you not build on the great central facts of Christianity? If you cannot cause such facts to blossom into doctrine, high thought, poetry, you might still cling to the historic certainties—I marvel at you, seizing the shadow in the river, and drowning yourselves in the very act of seizing it. We are surprised at this religious fickleness, because it destroys all confidence in the opinions of the persons who practise it, or who are its willing or unwilling victims. We never consult them in the crises of life; we soon



know that they are destitute of solidity, we hear their opinions, and pay no heed to them ; any forger can impose upon them, they will print anything that any forger will send to them ; they are printers, not critics ; and when they come out with their pompous and universe-overflowing "We," we say, How many are there of them ? We did not think there could be so many fools in the world ! I marvel that ye are so soon turned about, lured away, decoyed into forbidden places and into the land of darkness.

Look at this religious fickleness, not only as a matter of fact, and a matter of surprise, but a matter of really curious interest—psychological interest, if you will, metaphysical interest. How does it come to be so ? It comes not seldom through vanity. Of vanity there are many species ; some are vain of personal appearance, some are vain of social position, but we are dealing now with men who are intellectually vain, and intellectual vanity is about the greatest curse, short of direct criminality, which can fall upon the Church of Christ. When our preachers and our hearers become intellectually clever, and only so, the Holy Ghost has gone, the power of the Church is lost ; and if we could read hidden words we should find on the door of the sanctuary, "ICHABOD," the glory is departed. We are not called to the Lord's Communion table or banqueting-board as epicures, as wine-tasters, as men who are authorised to give opinions upon the abundance with which the Lord has charged his festival ; we are called as hungry, thirsting souls, to eat and drink abundantly of God's precious gifts, and not to criticise, but to be thankful for them.

Then there is in addition to that, what may be called a diseased love of novelty. There is no city, probably, in the world so given to running after so-called novelty as London. It is very hard work for any really good preacher to live in London. If a preacher were to announce that he would do the most grotesque thing ever attempted in the pulpit, the Church doors would be besieged an hour before the blasphemy was committed. Men do not care for eternity, the truly old and venerable quantity, covered with the hoar of God's own duration, ennobled by the antiquity which belongs to God's own throne.

Then there is an action of what may be termed selfishness that enters into this curious result. Men make pet creeds, pet churches, pet dogmas. They do not take in the whole thought of God, so far as it is possible for the mind to do so; in other words, they do not allow the mind to dwell upon the wholeness of the Divine content, they take out certain elements and qualities, and magnify these in the hope that, by doing so independently, they may attract the kind of attention which they easily construe into the offering of homage, or into an idolatrous oblation.

What, then, is there to be no change? There is to be change every day. There are many changes. There is a change that is subject to the charge of fickleness, and there is a change that belongs to the beneficent law of progress. In the springtime the fields are never the same two days together; the blade of grass is a little longer, the flower that was just opening its eye, as if in fear, yesterday is to-day looking the sun full in the face; the birds that were almost afraid of their own voices a week ago, because of the cold east wind, are filling the air with dance and joy and glee and festival of music, because of the warmer atmosphere, because of the more genial sun. That is the change we delight in—the change of evolution, development, progress, sense of increasing liberty. You would not like your child to be the same to-day as it was five years ago; when strangers say they would not have known him again, because he is so much taller, you are parentally pleased with the compliment, and properly so: if persons were to say they would have known him again in a moment, for he had not changed one atom in five years, you know how down-hearted you would be. Whatever change belongs to progressive life we love, and hail and look upon as a proof of God's nearness and continual benediction. Let us cultivate depth of conviction. For God's sake, be something. Have any of you been removed, or are any of you in the act of removing from central verities? retrace your steps. This is the day of grace, which, in other words, is the day of opportunity: come back! Preachers, hear your brother preacher; the time will come when what are now looked upon as the old outworn truths of Christianity will become the great originalities of the time. For a period we must stand back, for just now nobody

wants us ; that is to say, nobody comparatively speaking, having our eyes upon the millions of a seething civilisation : but if you will hold on by the Cross, some day you will awake to find that what were once deemed little common-places have been recalled as inspirations and originalities. Bread and water will outlast all the confectionery in the world. Children like confectionery ; you offer a child a piece of sugar or a piece of bread, and the little hand goes out toward the sugar. But no life was ever reared on sweatmeats. When we want fighting done, we avoid the confectioner's counter ; when we want real athletic muscle and vigour and capability, we come down to simples. There are those who lead themselves out into obscurity and oblivion by the door of self-indulgence, but the men who are to rule the world influentially from age to age are men who, how lofty soever may be their speculations and their dreamings, are centred in great verities, immutable truths. I want you to believe in God, in Jesus Christ the Saviour of the world, in the Holy Ghost the Comforter, the Paraclete, the Teacher, the Light, and the Director of the Church. I do not care about your believing in my theories or speculations regarding this doctrine : I hold it is possible to believe in the doctrines themselves in their naked austerity, if I may so use the expression, without seeking coincidence and harmony with the opinions of men, who are but of yesterday and who know nothing. If we are to have a battle of words, the fight will never cease ; if we are to come face to face with the Cross we shall say to one another, Brethren, whatever our theories, speculations, and metaphysics may be, truly this man was the Son of God. If we can say that with our heart, and commit our whole life to it, we are not far from the kingdom of heaven.

### Galatians i. 6-8.

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."

### THE SOLIDARITY OF HISTORY.

IT is noteworthy that Paul does not unchurch these Celtic Christians. We have seen in our first exposition that these Galatians were the Irish men of their country. They were rude, inconstant, given to unaccountable and irrational change. The Apostle comes down upon them with great dignity; for we have observed how lacking his salutation is in many of the elements which make his superscriptions so tender and sympathetic and fraternal: yet, notwithstanding all the fractiousness, fickleness, obstreperousness, Paul does not dismiss the Galatians from the kingdom of Christ. He smites with a rod, but still says to those who are most severely lacerated, "Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit." It would have been easier to unchurch the whole crowd. Destruction is always the easiest policy. There is a demonstrativeness and pomp about it, which may attract the notice of the selfish and the foolish. Whom you cannot subdue by reason, crush with your iron heel. This was not the policy of the Apostle; this has not been the policy of God, though it has often been threatened. When the Lord has been obliged in the conduct of his providence to follow this policy he has always, in the midst of it, relented and spared the neck of his enemies. We have seen him, in our Old Testament studies, come to a king and touch his forehead with leprosy, but leave the crown on. He came very nearly there to disrobing and dismissing the blasphemous monarch. The touch on the forehead should be a hint that the crown is no longer secure when character begins to give way. What a crown it is when the

leprous line is written under the first circlet of diamonds ! What do we see on the man's head ? The leprosy rather than the crown, or if we see the crown we say, What a mockery it is, a leper on the throne ! The Lord hath many people in his Church who have scars on their back. When of necessity you correct your little child, you do not disinherit him. It is because he is your child that you punish him. Why not correct another boy ? Because, you say, he does not belong to you. Love has its rights of correction. Yet the Apostle, who confesses in this Epistle that he is somewhat uncertain himself as to the right way of expression—for he says, "I speak after the manner of men"; and in another place he says, "or rather," and thus changes the point of view—the Apostle gets into one of his customary tempers when he drives out of the Christian pulpit the people who do not preach the right gospel. It would appear as if he could never endure that, whatever else he submitted to. There is, too, in the Epistle that subtle contempt so characteristic of Paul, that singular but undoubted introduction of sub-acid into his benediction. Read the Epistle in proof of this. When he comes upon men who are preaching another gospel he says, It "is not another." The meaning is that it is only another in an arithmetical sense, as who shall say, One, two, three. There is an arithmetical addition to the rubbish of the world, without there being any contribution of new genius, new life-blood, new fire ; it is another, and not another : arithmetical addition being the most contemptible increment that can be named. There is another that is the first development ; there is another that is the little seed in full flower. When did my little lady, the flower, look down upon the root and say, I have nothing to do with you ? She would no longer be a little lady ; she would be a prig, a pedant, and a fool. Nay, she says in all her splendour, I could not live one day but for the root—black and hidden and uncomely. But the other gospel, which Paul denounces, is but an arithmetical addition. Sometimes our solitude is turned into a plurality without our enjoyment being increased. There are men who say, "Never so little alone as when alone"; there are those who would always be joyful if they could always be in solitude. There is a possibility of intrusion of companionship without addition of friendship: there is

a plurality which does not mean association or fellowship ; it is so that the Apostle says, Here is another which is not another ; because it is not of the same quality, it does not belong to the same genus, and must therefore be driven out as a foreign element.

The Apostle was given to the use of strong language. There are timid people who are always afraid of strong men. You have seen timidity squirm under the pressure of great energy ; timidity has withdrawn, and gone away, and no man knew his sepulchre unto this day ; the energy was too much for the fragile little creature, it has gone to sip its tea, and babble its gossip, and await the coming of death. The Apostle Paul could open his mouth widely, and he had a tongue on which a curse could sit gracefully. Was it a curse in this case ? "Though even an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. . . . If any man preach another gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed"—let him be anathema. The word "anathema" was, however, pronounced in two different ways : when it was pronounced with a long e, as anathēma, it meant, Let him be set apart to God ; when it was pronounced with a short e, as anáthema, Let him be set apart to darkness and loss and ruin. How did the Apostle write the word ? He would not use a short e, if he could help it ; there is more music in the long e, it almost doubles the word, and thus doubles the sweetness of the word by its use in this connection. But, if the Apostle really did speak objurgatorily, he may have spoken to his own regret. Paul was never the man to make a mistake and then deny it. When he was talking such easy, fluent nonsense about marriage and the place of woman (as if he knew anything about that), and was writing so dictatorially about as to where woman should sit and how woman should dress and how woman should submit herself, he said again and again what he need not have said,—“I speak this by permission, and not of commandment,” “I speak as a man,” he might have said, as a foolish man. Was the Apostle then afraid of new ideas ? By no means : he was afraid of nothing. He said, if any man have a lamp, let him show it. He said, If any man has a theory, let him propound it : Try



all things, prove them, probe them, hold fast to that which is good. There are many persons who pronounce the anathema who were never called by the will of heaven "Paul, the Apostle." We are not apostles simply because we can denounce other people.

How great is Paul in his recognition of the merits of other men :—"For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles." There is the comprehensive genius of Scripture. It has a word for everybody. And when the Scripture is allowed to utter its own voice in its own way men are amazed, and say, How hear we then the wonderful works of God, every man in the tongue in which he was born. The Bible is all languages ; it only needs to be read well. Does the Apostle Paul find fault with the Apostle Peter saying, He is not a member of my community, he does not travel upon my lines, he does not preach to the Gentiles, he only can preach to the circumcision, if he were to attempt to preach to the Gentiles they would laugh at him ? Nothing of the kind. But that is how we speak of one another to-day. One brother says of himself, "I only preach to University men : the man to whom you refer," he continues, "may have a certain kind of faculty for addressing a certain kind of low creatures called the masses, or the working classes, but he has no gift whatever in preaching to the circumcision of letters." How foolish some men can be ! They do not recognise the diversity of administration but the same spirit working in all, using all, blessing all. We want the man who can speak to the circumcision, and the man who can speak to the Gentiles, and we want both the men to think highly of each other, and to say, Let who will speak unkindly of the ministers of God, the ministers themselves must be true to one another. If we could be thus true, we should prove ourselves to be in the apostolical succession. Yet Paul could magnify himself, and speak quite loudly in the most courtly ecclesiastical air ; he would not have been afraid even of an archbishop. "I said unto Peter before them all." What right had he to speak to Peter ? The right of truth, the right of sincerity ; not the right of a concealed bond, an official certificate, but the eternal right of conviction. We must have these larger rights recognised.

In chapter ii. 16-21 we have Paul at his very best:—

16. Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

17. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.

18. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.

19. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

20. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

21. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

This is the Pauline eloquence, this is the Pauline theology. Is that theology abstract, speculative, metaphysical? Not at all; it is personal, experimental, the voice of consciousness, the testimony of an inward and undeniable consciousness and experience. Men do not object to theology when it is alive: men do object, blessed be God, to everything that is dead. In God there is no darkness, no death: and God has so made us that we love life, beauty, and the spirit of assured and beneficent progress.

In chapter iii. the Apostle is still argumentatively upon a historical basis. The Apostle shows here the solidarity of history. Paul never broke history into little morsels that had no relation to one another. History in the hands of Paul, and in the hands of every philosopher, is not a sack of peas, which will run away from one another the moment you cut the sack: history was unity, continuity, development,—touch it at any point and every other point throbbed with sympathy. It is because we forget that we belong to the creation of God, that we make little men of ourselves, and subject ourselves to all the passing winds that care to make sport of our so-called convictions and our miscalled hopes and dreams of greatness. You and I lived when the Lord said, "Let us make man": then we began. It is because we think of men and not of Man, of the plural and not the plural total, that we lose rest and joy, and sense of triumph and immortality. An ancient emperor of Morocco ("It is lawful to learn from an enemy," saith the Latin proverb) said, "I have

been reading the Epistles of Paul, and if ever I change my religion I will become a Christian; but I do not like one thing in Paul, he changed his religion, and I think a man ought to die in the religion in which he was born." Thus spake the old emperor of Morocco. Was he right in charging Paul with changing his religion? He was wrong. Paul never changed his religion. Christianity is the consummation of Judaism. Properly understood, we all pass from Genesis to Matthew. We must all pass from Sinai to Mount Zion; we must all go from the mountain torn with lightning to the sweet green slopes where all is quietness, or where quietness is but a variety of music. There is no change in Paul as to fundamentals in Jesus Christ; "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus; and if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed." Verily this man was a historical philosopher; he grasped things with both hands, and looked them through and through, and was a true man before the altar of God.

Paul did not, however, live in the "good old times" of England; he says, "Though it be but a man's covenant, yet, if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto." He did not know what was going to happen, for in England in the days of the eighth Henry a man made his will, and stated that on no account was he to be buried with papistical rites; no mass was to be said over him, he was to be buried in the faith which he had professed through a lifetime; and they buried him so. But an unhappy namesake of mine, Dr. Parker, Chancellor of Worcester, had him dug up, and his bones burned. Paul said, "Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth or addeth thereto." These were the good old times of England! To his praise, be it said, Henry VIII. made that same Parker pay three hundred pounds fine for committing so high an offence; let good be spoken wherever it can be uttered with a clear conscience.

From a high theological argument the Apostle passes into what is difficult to distinguish from a little banter:—"Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are; ye have not injured me at all." Some have found in this an intimation of the fact, that

it did not lie within the power of the Galatians to injure a man like Paul. There may be a little sub-acid in this tone ; it may be that Paul is lifting himself up in religious and justifiable pride, as who should say, Brethren, it does not come within your power to injure a man called as I am, and protected by the whole armoury of heaven. Said the old bore to Aristotle, "I fear I try your patience, sir philosopher, by all this use of words." Said Aristotle, "You do not try my patience, for in truth I have not heeded one word you have uttered." It may be that something of the same kind was in the tone of the Apostle, for he could be haughty, he could by one step go to the other side of the universe from any man that offended him ; none so gentle, none so austere.

Finally he gives us a new hint as to the way of reading the Scripture—"Which things are an allegory." Some men are afraid of being allegorical ; these same men are afraid of everything, and therefore their fear amounts to nothing when applied to the exegesis of a mystic word. I find allegory everywhere in the Bible. There are those who would make the Bible but a box of letters, and they, forsooth, stand up and say, You read into the Bible things that are not there. I answer, Everything is in the Bible that is true, beautiful, musical, beneficent. "Which things are an allegory ;" study the parable, watch the development of the times and events, and carry back the present as a light to hold over the past. Only ages to come can explain some parts of the Bible. What do we mean when we say that such and such a man, great in letters or in statesmanship or in war, must be judged by history, that is to say, must be judged by men who come centuries after ? Can these men understand such great geniuses better than their contemporaries can understand them ? Most undoubtedly ; that is the philosophy of history. A man writing two hundred years from this date will write more completely and authoritatively about the men of to-day than the men of to-day could write even about themselves. There is a genius of history, there is a philosophical reading of the past. Let not the blind chide those who can see. God will send his Prophets and Apostles age after age, to tell what men meant who died five centuries before them.

### Galatians iii. 7.

“Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.”

#### THE SUBLIMEST GIFT OF GOD.

NO matter where they were born, they may call Abraham “father.” They were born Gentiles or pagans or savages, but by faith they may be made members of a noble and majestic lineage. This is what God is always doing; making the first last, and the last first, and showing men, that whatever point they may start from, they may by certain processes become associated with the most royal and exalted of human history. That you were born in obscurity is nothing; you can come out of it, you can sit down with Abraham as the son of the father of the faithful. We may be nothing according to the flesh, yet we may be kings and priests according to the spirit. Even a despised Gentile may become a son of Abraham. This is part of a still larger economy. Every man has an upward way set before him, if he has eyes to see it. You may have been born in a nameless pit; out of it there is a shining road to royalty, to heaven. If we could so elucidate this as to make the exposition in any degree worthy of the theme, we should turn upside down all the social standards and conventional usages and charters of so-called society.

What is the name of that—shall we call it magical or supernatural?—force of power whereby nothing is made into something, obscurity elevated into renown, humbleness of birth and faculty lifted up into illustriousness of ancestry and genius? The name of it is Faith. Know ye not that they which are of faith, the same, though they may have been born ten thousand years after Abraham and ten thousand constellations away from Abraham’s native place, are still the children of that second and that greater Adam. The race begins in Abraham. Adam is dead; Abraham lives for ever: the child of disobedience has passed away; the child of faith can never lose his fame or his power. Faith is all

the senses, with an addition. Faith has been called the sixth sense ; I would amend the expression and say it is all the senses in one, with an accent and an addition peculiarly its own. Faith is life. Faith is not an attribute, an element, an incident, something separable ; faith is the life, that which touches God, communicates with heaven, receives the treasures of eternity, develops them, perfects them, returns them in proof of industry and honourableness. Faith has been degraded by being made into a kind of intellectual hack, a miserable servile power in the life by which men are made to assent to things they do not understand. That is not faith at all. Faith is not a piece of church furniture. Faith is manhood at its best, life at its supremest, divinest point. Faith understands nothing ; faith despises understanding after a certain point. Faith is winged power, flying away to the tabernacle of the sun and worshipping in the temple of the unveiled presence of the Godhead. Faith must be redefined, if it is to be delivered from the mean uses to which sectaries have doomed it. When you are at your best, when you can all but hear the angels sing, when it becomes quite easy to you to believe that heaven is the next thing to be realised, the next point to be attained, the next joy to be experienced, then you are in a state of faith. There is no relation whatever between faith and doubt ; not even a contrastive relation. They are often put in contrast, as who should say, This man believes, and that man doubts. They have nothing to do with one another. This faith is the sublimest gift of God to man. By this faith we have new kinships ; by this faith we are established in new family relations ; by this faith we are cut adrift from the past and go on to light, which is the true freedom, boundless and eternal summer.

We may know something of the power, subtle and mighty, of Faith, by looking for a moment at what industry can do. Industry is a kind of lower faith. Industry has a certain degree of creative power ; industry can make two blades of grass grow where only one blade grew. Industry is a multiplying, expanding energy. It is so intellectually. A man toils at his book until he sees what the author means ; then the book is his as much as the author's ; it is his by right, and it is his for ever.



We toil intellectually, not knowing what the issue may be ; we are in search of our birth certificate. A man says to himself, I do not know to what father, in the higher realm of things, I belong ; I will go in quest of my credentials, I will work until I find the certificate ; perhaps this very day I may find out who is my father. He toils, and it begins to dawn upon him that he is a mathematician, and through industry he has come to claim his place in the lineage of mathematical genius. Or he investigates, using his one talent or his five as best he may ; and, lo, while he writes, the bush burns and is not consumed ; and at eventide he sees that he has written a poem : then he knows to what family he belongs. Again, a man toils and wonders, thinks and exercises himself in many ways ; the spirit of restlessness is in him. No one town can hold him, no one country is big enough for his expanding energy ; the explorer awakens within him, and he says, I belong to the household of travellers, discoverers : and he betakes himself to his natural relationships. Born in the obscurest street of his native town, he rises to prove that in the purpose of God he was meant to be a citizen of the world. We gradually find out whose children we are. There is a starting-point by which one man is the child of another. That is for a little time. Evolution may distinctly prove that we have nothing to do with our own fathers. In a very initial degree we may have touched here and there certain lines of history, but by faith or industry or inspiration, or by some special vision from God or visit from the angels, we may be newly related and put into eternal continuities. How difficult it is for some men to realise this ! They are very watchful about marriage certificates and ecclesiastical entries, and they pay so much under the name of " search fees " to find out where they were born and whose children they are. That matters nothing. An inquiry of that kind may enable you to claim a field here and a wallful of bricks yonder, but it ends in nothing. There is a higher lineage, and every one of us may get into it. Here is the great Gospel proclamation ; this is the great hope, and this the unfading glory of the Christian revelation. The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost ; the Son of Man has lighted a candle and is searching the house diligently that he may find the piece which has fallen away. Cheer thee, O

aching, weary heart! to-morrow thou mayest discover that Aristotle is thy father. Poor fools are they who read their lineage on gravestones. Your lineage is in your soul. You are what you are, first by the call of God, and secondly by the exercise of those talents, one, two, or five, with which he entrusted you. "Know ye, therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." Born in the most desolate and forsaken islands of the sea, they yet, by faith, sit down in the household of the good, and partake of the hospitality of God. This opens a new way to every soul; this smites out of the fool's hand the little yellow piece of paper, by which he sought to prove the respectability of other people.

Thus we come into the larger kinship. Thus we discover our true family relationships. Thus the unity of humanity is established. There is an intellectual as well as a physical lineage. If your father were the greatest scholar that ever lived, he could not leave you even the alphabet; you would have to learn it as if you were the child of the poorest peasant that ever ploughed a field. You must in this way by the faith of labour find out to what family you belong. Here is a man who belongs to the family of Aristotle; another belongs to the family of Shakespeare; another belongs to the family of Angelo, having craft and genius in the hammering and chiselling of marble. You come from God. Why do you stop at your birth certificate? as if that had anything but a merely parochial meaning. Know ye not that ye are the children of God; the religion that thus elevates men and sends them on great quests, giving them sublime assurances that their quests shall be answered with great and generous replies, is a true religion. A religion that would say to a man, "Keep where you are," is a bad religion, even though it be written in a catechism. The true catechism, as soon as it is published, will say, Find out who you are; and as for the station into which you were born, get rid of it by all honest, legitimate, and commendable means. Never go down; always go up. If you started with one talent, you were meant to double it. The Lord is always saying Rise, follow, and I will give thee a land flowing with milk and honey. So we put on our sandals and grasp our staff, and take the first day's journey: we belong to Abraham, to the house-

hold of faith. There must be no forcing. There is an industry that is patient and can wait; there is a possibility of clutching too soon and missing the prize. We really have nothing whatever to do with the mere handling of the prize; our business is to deserve it; men cannot keep it away from us. Therein you see what is meant by the sovereignty and the election of God. The whole universe is founded upon the great idea of sovereignty and election and Divine nomination, and if you will work, young man, patiently, steadily, and never think about results at all, you will find yourself in the harvestfield ere you imagined the seed-time itself had quite gone. The righteous cannot be hindered. The wicked cannot be kept from hell. All envy is on its way to the everlasting fire. All jealousy is doomed to the hell of hells. Medicine cannot cure it, surgery cannot cut out of it the poison that makes it what it is. This is the election of God. Are you, then, to be discouraged because you did not start as well as the man whom you know so well to have an armful of certificates and credentials? Nothing should discourage you but sin. Nothing but sin can permanently stand in your way. Be ashamed of nothing but iniquity. Do not be ashamed of environment, but seek to improve it. The one thing that will overwhelm you, unless you yourself by the grace of God in the fulness of your strength can resist it, is sin. Sin can pull a sovereign off the throne; sin can quench the brightest lamp in the temple; sin can spoil all our heraldic images and blazonry. Sin means death.

What then is the great speech of Christianity to the human race? It is that we may all become somebody. The last may be first, the first may be last. It lies in the power of every soul according to the gift and calling of God to be in God's house. That house is all beautiful. The basement is as beautiful in its own way as the upper chambers. It is better to be the humblest little servant of God than to reign in hell. He is somebody who is faithful. He is somebody of consequence who is building up a noble, massive beneficent character. Of course it is hard for you to start where other men have started, because you had not their advantages; but therein is your power to be shown. It is not to their credit that they started where they did, nor is it to your discredit; neither of you had anything to do with it; but know

ye not that there is a force called Faith by which a man is awakened up in every faculty of his soul, and made to burn through and through and all over with the very fire of God? Seize that heavenly heritage. As for the fields and mansions of time and space, they are held but for a limited number of days. The heavenly inheritance fadeth not away. You may not be rich in money, but you can be rich in thoughts. You may be rich in service. To the man who is in real, honest, useful service there is no time. He does not know anything about the clock; he is never oppressed by a sense of weariness. It is not his business to find out how many half-holidays he can have in the week. Presently the great social problem will be whether we can have on the whole one half-day's work in the week, or whether on the whole we had better not. We have shaved it down to a fine point now; we have whittled it into its last half-hour. To the man who is in real work, and who loves work, there is no time, there is no work; it is all holiday. This is the very joy and delight of perfect service, that it ends in play, in mirthfulness, in music. See the apprentice trying his hand for the first time upon some handicraft. There is no music in him; watch his face, look at the contortions of his mouth and tongue; see how his eyes are strained; observe how, though but in his teens, he is almost made an old man of by his anxiety. He is a little better the month following; in six months he is much more at his ease; in twelve months he is doing the work and whistling over it. Thus, as it has been often shown, all true service leads up to music, to play, to holiday! And so we touch the larger economy by which men enter into nobler relations, become possessed of larger charters, and begin to enjoy the liberty of completer enfranchisement. Why should you struggle so as to make a hundred pounds into a hundred guineas? It is not worth the swelter. Why this anxiety to put another pane into your window? It is not worth doing. The thing worth doing is to have another thought, to ascend another round on the ladder of prayer; the thing worth doing is to love more, serve better, help a larger number of clients; and in doing all that, the other things are added unto you. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things, mere trifles, little specks of dust called estates and inheritances, shall be added unto you.

## PRAYER.

**ALMIGHTY GOD**, the desire of our souls is toward thy name, and toward the remembrance of all thy works. Thy name is love ; thy works are framed in wisdom, and are shaped so as to do good to mankind. All things are for our sake : we know this in Christ Jesus the Lord. There is nothing kept back from them that trust thee with all their love ; yea, thou dost confide unto them the secret of the Lord, so that they know things that are not, and things that are invisible, and whilst yet upon the earth their citizenship is in heaven. They have this mystery of the double life, this feeling that things are larger than they look, and this assurance that every shadow has some substance behind it, the full mystery of which is not to be revealed to-day, or to-morrow, but on the third day when death is perfected in resurrection. Great are the gifts confided to those who love thee ; they are stewards in a great household ; their responsibilities are a thousand and more : behold, thou hast charged them with prophecies and teachings, encouragements and expostulations. Sometimes thou hast armed them with rebukes and judgments, so that their way in life has been the way of men whose lot is hard. Yet thou art bringing things together, touching one another for a moment and flying off again, and then bringing them back ; now thou art haughty and unapproachable, anon thou art gentle and condescending and very pitiful and dwelling in broken hearts as in chosen temples ; now thou wilt separate men one from another, and they shall never see one another again, and lo ! to-morrow they are brought back in deeper, tenderer brotherhood than ever : and so thou art working, working wondrously, working constantly, and none may say unto thee, What doest thou ? for thy way is a great deep, and thy judgment is higher than heaven. We would rest therefore in the Lord until the harvest time, and when the angels have cut down the ripened fields we will see what bread God has been growing for the universe. Meanwhile, keep us humble, simple, true, sincere and honourable ; may we be found industrious between the rising of the sun and the going down of the same ; making of this world as if it were much, and then shaking it out of our hand as if it were the least trifle we had ever known. May we be assured that here we have no continuing city ; may we never be ashamed of the pilgrim's staff or the traveller's sandals ; may we set the one down and put off the other and take them to us again, and hasten away as men who should be so many miles farther on ere the lengthening of the shadows. Keep us quiet in the confidence of thy sovereignty ; enable us to accept the whole providence of life as a scheme we can neither measure nor control, but in relation to which we may show ourselves either obedient or perverse. Help us to say, The end is not yet : we will judge nothing before the time ; even the grave shall be part of the garden, and the loss shall be part of the wealth, and the pain which the flesh has felt shall add to the refinement of the spirit. Thus may we live in the Lord and in the Cross of his Son, and thus may we find on Calvary the centre, the unity, the mystery, the music, and the purpose of all



things. Blessed, eternal Cross, soon to become a tree in which the Cross shall be forgotten, so far as its pain and shame and ignominy are concerned, and the tree shall be vast as infinity, and every leaf a leaf of healing. The Lord accept our song of praise for all the goodness of the way; sometimes thou hast caused us to sit down awhile that we might get our breath again; sometimes thou hast taken us into an unknown hostelry, and there refreshed us with bread when we thought there was none; and sometimes thou hast made thy flock lie down at noon in the cool shadow. Thou ledest thy flock like a shepherd, thou art gentle to those who are in weariness, and as for the lambs there is no place but thine arms warm enough for their preservation and nurture. Good is the Lord; his loving-kindness and his tender mercy are beyond all our thought: we will therefore praise him loudly, sweetly, with our whole heart, with the buoyancy of ecstatic love, with the assurance of men who have already gotten the victory. Let our home be sacred to thee; let our business be earnestly done; let our lowest life have about it the sacredness of sacrament, and may our whole life be an oath to serve the spirit of the Cross. The Lord hear us for others as well as for ourselves: for the sick and the weary, for the prodigal who never prays, and who thinks he can find what heaven he wants in the bare wilderness; hear us for those in peril on the sea; be with men whose lives are quickly losing all light, all music, all hope; send upon the nations the spirit of true judgment, awaken the conscience of the world; convince the world of sin, then lead the world to Calvary. Amen.

### Galatians iv. 9.

“After that ye have known God, or rather are known of God.”

### AMENDED EXPRESSIONS.

**I**N the course of his writing the Apostle said, “After that ye have known God, or rather——.” That is the point. The subject is Amended Expressions, self-correction in the use of language. Sometimes we are too fluent, and we are halfway through a sentence before it occurs to us that we are on the wrong track. We start sentences from the wrong end. However skilful we may be in the use of words, sometimes we are halfway through a sentence before we see that the sentence might have been much better if we had started it from the other end. The Apostle was a tumultuous speaker. The one thing he lacked was polish—a fatal lack in the estimation of pedants and of people who have nothing to do. Hear him:—“After that ye have known God, or rather are known of God”—which I ought to have said at first but did not. We have seen instances in which inspired writers have corrected themselves and have corrected public impression. Thus:—“It is Christ that died,



yea rather." Why, that is the same man, the same tone, the same word. Is he going to correct himself? He is going to correct himself by enlargement. "Yea rather, that is risen again,"—the greater including the less. This would seem then to be part of the Apostle's habit of writing and talking, to begin in a small way and then, with almost startling abruptness, to put the same thought before us on the largest lines. "After that ye have known God"—no, no, no!—"rather are known of God": "It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again." This man always ascends; he never withdraws a great thought that he may replace it with a little one. He surprises himself into enlarged interpretations, into completer meanings. It is well therefore that the Apostle should always be allowed to finish his own sentences. Never interrupt a speaker of this sort, eccentric as he may appear to be in his mode of speaking; when he has launched out his expressions, then judge him, but not until then. It was very important to correct such an expression as is used in the text, considering the people to whom the Apostle was writing. They were a foolish people; they were Celts, Gauls, verily Gaul-atians, a Frenchified and Hibernised people, French-Irish folks, who were most impulsive, taking up an idea before it was fully laid down before them. The Apostle knew them well, and adapted his ministry accordingly. The Gauls, east and west, have always been celebrated for this mobility of mind. Cæsar noticed it in the Western Gauls, hence we have his expression in speaking of them *mobilitas et levitas animi*. Such has been their character all through the ages and all over the world,—too quick, without reserve power; a flash, and they do not know what they have said, or done; and they may in one moment be sorry for the action in which they have taken part, and may humbly apologise. One moment they will give their very eyes to the Apostle; the Gauls were never inhospitable; when they were excited eyes went for nothing, and hands and tongues; and the next moment the evil eye had bewitched them, and they were going after all manner of frivolity and emptiness. O foolish Galatians! who hath cast the evil eye upon you? Having to deal with people of this kind, the Apostle swiftly corrected himself. He has said in his easy and generous manner, "ye have known God," and then suddenly he exclaimed.

"or rather": O ye volatile Galatians, or rather; O ye effervescing Celts, I must bind you down to the real sequence of things—"or rather are known of God."

The distinction is important. In the first instance taking the words "after that ye have known God," we might be led to suppose that the Galatians had discovered God. This indeed is not a Galatian sophism only; this is the sophism that underlies a great deal of orthodox thinking. It is difficult to get away from the notion that we have discovered God. We think we have something to do with our own theology; we suppose that intellect has been out early in the morning ere the dew had gone up from the meadows, and has actually come back with the discovery of God. Nothing of the kind. "The world by wisdom knew not God." A discovered God is an idol, a thing in which you have rights. You say there is a law of discovery upon the land, there is a law of flotsam and jetsam; there is a law of the rights of adventure:—we discovered this river and we claim it, we discovered this island and we plant our flag upon it. No man ever discovered God. The Apostle states the right sequence when he says, "or rather are known of God": God discovered you, God found you out; the true conception of God is the conception of revelation; if you think you had anything to do with the discovery of God, then you will have all manner of tricks in words and phrases; but if you begin to feel that God first loved you, discovered you, came after you, redeemed you, then you will give glory to God.

Even in so simple a change as this we have whole worlds of philosophy. Here is a true view of inspiration. The Apostle corrects himself. The Apostle does not correct the truth, but he corrects the way of putting the truth. Men should distinguish between these things, vitally. The key of reconciliation may be found in that distinction. Paul's mind does not change, but quickly remembering the kind of mind to which he was writing, he set the same doctrine in another form or aspect, that there might be the less mistake made about it even by volatile critics, like the Galatians. We lose much by having a false idea of inspiration. We have often to maintain a forlorn cause, for the

reason that we do not start our statement from the right point. The Apostle says, There is a better way of saying this, I will therefore withdraw the first expression and replace it by another ; there has been no confusion in my mind, I have not misrepresented the Holy Spirit, but I have so used words that you may mistake them, therefore I do in effect withdraw these words, and put others in their places. Have I lost any part of my Bible by that concession ? Nay, rather I have gained the Bible, more intelligently, more reverently, more trustfully. Here are writers who come after me and accommodate themselves as far as possible to my capacity and my intelligence and my temperament ; they are so anxious that I should not mistake the Divine truth that they take my infirmities into consideration ; they will work at the sentence until they get it right. Have confidence in writers and speakers who so treat their material. We may be right in our meaning yet not right in our first expression of it, but seeing that we are consciously right and that we are honest men we seize the very first words that come to us, always reserving the right to say, "or rather." Such liberty every teacher must claim ; such liberty the Holy Ghost accorded in the case of the most illustrious Apostle.

Here also we see the distinction between Christianity and every other religion. What has every other religion been doing ? Seeking God. What does Christianity do ? It represents God seeking man. It required inspiration to state that truth ; it never occurred, so far as we know, to unassisted human reason to represent God as seeking the sinner, the creature. All Pagan philosophies represent man as almost finding God. Some mythologies represent man as making up for one true God by a large number of imperfect deities ; there shall be a deity of the sun and the moon and the stars, and the water and the woods and the seasons, yea, there shall be deities representing various mental moods ; and surely when we totalise this pantheon we shall have God. The search is noble, the quest is to be spoken of with respect, and not with contempt even when its action is eccentric and fantastic ; whenever the soul is seeking God it is to be encouraged in the pursuit, though that pursuit be marked by much stumbling, and by many mistakes every

day. At that point the Gospel should be preached, namely, that man cannot find out the Almighty unto perfection, but that God has come to seek the creatures, the child, the sinner, the wanderer, and he will not return until he has found him. Behold your evangel, that is your charge, ordained and consecrated men of God.

We have not only a view of inspiration, and a distinction drawn between the religion of paganism and the religion of Christianity, but we have here established the right of the Church to seek out and represent the largest meaning of Divine words. This is the business of the true student. Here it is that criticism finds its function and its sanction. We do not want a new writing, we want a new reading. We want larger reading, more music in the soul, therefore more melody in the voice. There is an inspired reading. Lord God the Holy Ghost open our eyes that we may behold wondrous things out of thy law ; touch our tongues that thy words may fall from them like music from an appointed and skilfully played instrument, so that no tone may be lost, so that every syllable may be as the facet of a diamond throwing out the light of higher suns. When I find men who can read anything but the Bible I find men whose education has been neglected. They may call themselves ministers and teachers ; I judge them by two things : first, how do they read ? secondly, how do they pray ? Their manuscripts I care nothing for, their elaborate mechanised discourses on subjects they cannot handle I despise : but when I hear my preacher read I know whether he has been closeted with the Master, when I hear him pray I know what length of time he has spent in the upper and inner sanctuary, where the light never dies down into eventide. We do not want a new Bible, we want a new reading of the old Bible. We must always take care that our meaning is the larger meaning. If ever we make the Bible say less, we are on the wrong track of exposition. When we confine the root to itself we are mistaking the purpose of the Creator of the root ; when the Lord gave us the root he said, Put that under such and such conditions and relations, and out of it there shall come a colour, a beauty, that will shame the garniture of Solomon. Thus we may always know whether our criticism is

true or not. If it be a large, grand criticism, filling all heaven with light, then it has been given to us of God ; if it is a little criticism, powerfully sustaining "our sect" it is a lie.

We might take an example of what is meant by turning a sentence round and thus finding the larger meaning. Thus :—  
"But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you" (Rom. vi. 17). Is that clear? Yes. Then it clear what does it mean? Why obviously it means that sundry persons were appointed to deliver sundry documents to the churches ; they came like letter-carriers and in effect said, "We deliver the doctrine to you," and then they vanish : can anything be clearer? No : and hardly anything can be falser. How then? Why contrariwise, just as this same Apostle corrects himself in the text. The Revised Version gives the true reading :—"Ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered." The delivery took place at the other end. We are not critics, we are delivered men, we are handed over. Now we begin to see the meaning of religious inspiration and religious enthusiasm. What, forsooth ! is this it? that the documents have been delivered to me, and I have to read them and pronounce an opinion upon them? Contrariwise, the documents are not delivered to me, I am delivered to the documents, bound hand and foot and head,—the slave of truth, the bondman of God. You thought the Bible was to be handled by you, whereas you have to be handled by the Bible. You thought you were called upon as respectable citizens to pronounce an opinion upon revelation ! It is extremely humiliating, but the truth stands exactly in the other way. The Bible comes to judge us.

Or take an instance of the larger translation from this epistle. The Apostle, in a tumult of excitement, in what we might call a divine rage, says, "I would they were even cut off which trouble you." What does he mean? Why obviously an act of excision ; he would have the knife drawn as between the Galatians and their tormentors, and he would cut off the tormentors and let them fall into any place that would receive them. That is clear?



Yes, too clear; it has about it the clearness of shallowness. There is not one word of truth in it. The Apostle's meaning is larger and more precise and more crushing in its practical application. These Galatians were not converted Jews, they were converted Pagans, and they or their ancestors were the worshippers of the earth-goddess Cybele, and that earth-goddess was served by priests who were self-mutilated, who had done some wild cutting upon themselves. These priests were always known by the Romans as Galli—almost Galatians you see again. The Apostle says, These men are not waiting to bring you to Judaism, which is a religion which was true, but they want to bring you back to your old paganism: I would God that they would be consistent, that they would carry out their own reasoning to its logical issues, and show you what kind of circumcision they want you to undergo; I wish they would be self-consistent and would come right down to the square end of their own logic and say, This is what we want to be at; then you would see their meaning and repulse it. But evil teachers often conceal their meaning; they are very clever in the use of ambiguity. The *double entendre* is their great weapon. When you believe them in their first meaning and go a mile or two after them and remind them of the acceptance you put upon their words, they say, Nothing of the kind; that is not what we meant; you have mistaken us, your interpretation is imperfect: what we really did mean to do with you was to thrust you into everlasting darkness. Beware of the awful avalanche; beware the awful subtlety and the insidiousness of the man who will lecture to you in an innocent way, simply asking you to follow the light of reason, lift up your head and be as sunny and trustful as you can, and go with him along the flowery road. When you are ten miles along that road he will tell you that he never meant what you thought he signified; when it is too late for you to return he will tell you his original meaning. Beware! resist the devil, and he will flee from you; be sober, be vigilant; for your adversary in many a form, lion and serpent and angel of light, goeth about seeking whom he may devour.

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